

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6141

As of February 7, 2018

Title: An act relating to strengthening school district plans for recognition, screening, and response to emotional or behavioral distress in students.

Brief Description: Strengthening school district plans for recognition, screening, and response to emotional or behavioral distress in students.

Sponsors: Senators McCoy, Wellman, Van De Wege, Keiser, Hasegawa and Kuderer; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/16/18, 1/23/18 [DP-WM, w/oRec].

Ways & Means: 2/01/18.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to develop an online one-hour training module for school staff on recognition, screening, and response to emotional or behavioral distress in students.
- Directs educational service districts (ESDs) to identify a regional mental health coordinator with certain responsibilities.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Rolfes, Vice Chair; Billig, Hunt, Mullet and Pedersen.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Zeiger, Ranking Member; Hawkins, Padden and Rivers.

Staff: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Staff: Jeffrey Naas (786-7708)

Background: School District Plan. Starting in 2014, school districts are required to have a plan for recognition, initial screening, and response to emotional or behavioral distress in students, including but not limited to: indicators of possible substance abuse, violence, youth suicide, and sexual abuse. School districts must annually provide the plan to all district staff. Among other items, the plan must identify training opportunities for staff and describe how the district will provide training on the obligation to report physical abuse or sexual misconduct.

Student Emotional or Behavioral Distress Training. School nurses, social workers, psychologists, and counselors must complete a three-hour training program on youth suicide screening and referral as a condition of certification.

Educational service districts (ESDs) must develop and maintain the capacity to offer training for educators and other school district staff on recognition, initial screening, and response to emotional or behavioral distress in students. An ESD may demonstrate capacity by employing staff with sufficient expertise to offer the training or by contracting with others. Training may be offered on a fee-for-service basis, or at no cost if funds are available.

Summary of Bill: Online Training Module. Subject to appropriations, OSPI must develop and make available an online one-hour training module for school staff on recognition, screening, and response to emotional or behavioral distress in students.

This training does not replace the requirement for school counselors, psychologists, social workers, and nurses to complete a three-hour youth suicide prevention training. School staff may complete the three-hour training in lieu of the one-hour training module.

Regional Mental Health Coordinators. Subject to appropriations, each ESD will identify a regional mental health coordinator. The coordinator will be responsible for:

- coordinating training activities;
- providing technical assistance and training to school districts to complete, maintain, and update school district plan requirements;
- tracking school districts' completion of school district plans; and
- reporting to OSPI by June 30 each year.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: Suicide is the first leading cause of death for youth ages 10 to 14 and the second leading cause of death for ages 15 to 34. There is not a comprehensive program for suicide prevention. Suicide is not openly discussed. This bill creates an infrastructure for a comprehensive

program in schools throughout the state by utilizing ESDs and building on strengths already in place. School is a place where youth come into contact with many adults who can help if they know the warning signs. School districts are asking for more mental health support. There are not enough counselors and many are mainly focused on academic needs. This bill provides resources that will help schools better support students with emotional and behavioral needs. Youth and parents are not aware of the resources and support that are available to prevent suicide.

Persons Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: Senator John McCoy, Prime Sponsor; Jennifer Barron, Forefront Suicide Prevention; Sarah Marsh, citizen; Camille Goldy, OSPI; Michael Hickman, Capital Region Educational Service District; Elsa Marsh, citizen; Kim Stormbreaker, school counselor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education): No one.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: Schools are required to adopt a plan for recognition, screening, and response to emotional and behavioral distress. Not all schools have the skillsets or capacity to meet these requirements. This bill greatly expands the capacity to meet the requirements. This bill addresses a fundamental mental health problem in the schools. The bill will address issues that have long needed to be addressed. Nationally, one in five students considered suicide in the past twelve months. In Washington State, two students die each week by suicide. The regional coordinators will expand behavioral supports. This bill has the potential to prevent suicide tragedies from occurring and providing a support system for students in the aftermath of a crisis. My daughter tried to kill herself three times in high school. We demanded a 504 plan so teachers could spot signs of anxiety and distress in my daughter. The teachers were trained to spot distress. Not all parents and schools have these resources.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Seth Dawson, Washington State Psychiatric Association; Camille Goldy, OSPI; Erin Riffe, AESD; Sara Ellsworth, ESD 113; Kathleen Beaudoin, citizen.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means): No one.