SENATE MEMORIAL 23

55TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2021

INTRODUCED BY

Cliff R. Pirtle

A MEMORIAL


WHEREAS, in 2018, New Mexico had the nation's highest suicide rate; and

WHEREAS, the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic has exacerbated mental health issues, from illnesses and deaths to lost jobs and isolation; and

WHEREAS, the world of children, teens and young adults has been disrupted, with schools shuttered, sports and other activities canceled and large gatherings of friends prohibited;
and

WHEREAS, in New Mexico, twenty-nine percent of deaths of young people ages fifteen to twenty-four were due to suicide, according to statistics presented to the legislative finance committee on December 8, 2020; and

WHEREAS, although overall suicide numbers in the state slightly decreased in 2019, deaths of young people ages fifteen to twenty-four continued to increase; and

WHEREAS, currently, about one-half of the suicide funding at the department of health and the behavioral health services division of the human services department is allocated to youth, who account for fifteen percent of the suicides in the state; and

WHEREAS, the department of health recently reestablished a suicide prevention coalition to explore multiple strategies to prevent suicide; and

WHEREAS, there is an urgent need to address depression and mental illness in young people; and

WHEREAS, fifty percent of students with mental illness drop out of school; and

WHEREAS, early recognition and early treatment are essential to prevent mental illness from worsening, becoming chronic or ending in suicide; and

WHEREAS, professional development training of educators and staff members to support mental health and early
intervention in suicide prevention is important; and

WHEREAS, evidence-based professional training organizations that take a public health approach, connect schools with community supports and engage students in reducing stigma and increasing help-seeking behaviors are available; and

WHEREAS, educators and staff members need to be prepared to engage in conversation, be knowledgeable enough about mental health conditions to make referrals and provide a safe environment for talking about mental health issues and suicide with students and students' families;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the suicide prevention coalition of the department of health, the behavioral health services division of the human services department and the public education department be requested to study and make recommendations for professional development training to support mental health and early intervention as suicide prevention; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the requirement that all public school educators and support staff receive training in mental health and suicide risks and the prevention of suicide be considered; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that required training of school support staff in mental health and suicide risks and the prevention of suicide be considered; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that mandatory training be
considered as a condition of new employment and to fulfill
necessary professional development training requirements for
individuals employed by schools on a full-time, part-time and
contractual basis; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the establishment of minimum
standards for a training program be requested to include mental
illness and mental health education, including suicide
prevention and coping and referral tools for professionals; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the suicide prevention
colalition of the department of health, the behavioral health
services division of the human services department and the
public education department be requested to report their
findings and recommendations to the interim legislative
education study committee by November 1, 2021; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
transmitted to the secretary of health, the secretary of human
services, the chair of the suicide prevention coalition, the
secretary of public education and the chair of the interim
legislative education study committee.

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