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SENATE MEMORIAL 23

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

INTRODUCED BY

Cliff R. Pirtle

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE SUICIDE PREVENTION COALITION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION OF THE HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT AND THE PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT TO STUDY AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING TO SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH AND EARLY INTERVENTION AS SUICIDE PREVENTION.

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;

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1 and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 WHEREAS, professional development training of educators  
25 and staff members to support mental health and early

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1 intervention in suicide prevention is important; and

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

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

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

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

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

25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that mandatory training be

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1 considered as a condition of new employment and to fulfill  
2 necessary professional development training requirements for  
3 individuals employed by schools on a full-time, part-time and  
4 contractual basis; and

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

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

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