

LESC bill analyses are available on the New Mexico Legislature website (www.nmlegis.gov). Bill analyses are prepared by LESC staff for standing education committees of the New Mexico Legislature. LESC does not assume any responsibility for the accuracy of these reports if they are used for other purposes.

LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
57th Legislature, 1st Session, 2025

Bill Number	<u>HB58</u>	Sponsor	<u>Herndon/Gurrola</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.229188.1</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>HHHC/HAFC</u>
Short Title	<u>Mental Health Programs in Schools Funding</u>		
Analyst	<u>Hicks</u>	Original Date	<u>1/24/2025</u>
		Last Updated	<u>2/27/2025</u>

FOR THE LEGISLATIVE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 58 (HB58) would make an appropriation to the Public Education Department (PED) to support mental health training and wellness spaces in kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) schools. The bill would direct PED to use \$300 thousand of the allocated funding to partner with an organization specializing in trauma-informed and culture-centered suicide prevention training for school personnel, students, and the community. HB58 further directs PED to use the additional \$1.75 million appropriation to support the operation of 14 mental health rooms in New Mexico schools.

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill appropriates \$2.05 million from the general fund to PED for expenditure in FY26. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY26 shall revert to the general fund.

The House Appropriations and Finance Committee Substitute for House Bills 2 and 3 (HB2/HAFCS) includes \$1 million from the public education reform fund to pilot wellness rooms in public and charter schools.

HB58 could have fiscal implications for PED, as they would need to dedicate department resources to support the distribution of the proposed funds.

The proposed allocation of \$1.75 million to support 14 mental health rooms amounts to \$125 thousand per room. The schools selected to operate these rooms could see additional fiscal impacts not covered by this funding, depending upon the specific context of the school community.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

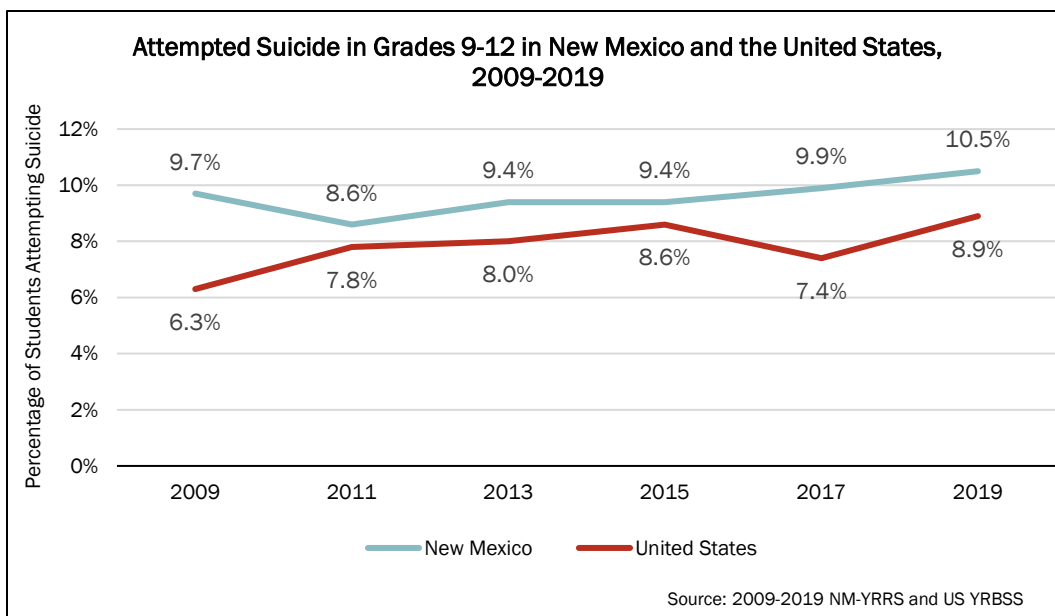
Legislative Context. In the 2022 legislative session, the New Mexico Legislature passed [House Memorial 43 \(HM43\)](#), requesting LESC and PED to organize a task force to develop a plan for mental wellness spaces in schools. The HM43 task force studied examples of wellness rooms both here in New Mexico (Taos, Las Cruces, Albuquerque) and in other states (Utah, Pennsylvania). The task force’s [final report](#) recommended a pilot program to establish 10 wellness rooms in New Mexico middle and high schools.

Following this task force, the Legislature provided funding to support limited implementation of wellness rooms in K-12 schools. In FY24, the Legislature appropriated \$200 thousand to fund a PED-led pilot program for wellness rooms in public and charter schools. In FY25, the Legislature continued to fund wellness rooms with an appropriation of \$200 thousand.

Mental Health Rooms. Mental health rooms, sometimes alternatively referred to as student wellness rooms or mental wellness rooms, are not defined in statute. In practice, wellness rooms are designated spaces within schools for students to take brief breaks from their day to manage their emotions and support overall well-being. Wellness rooms can be a place where students relax for a few minutes, get a snack, and can reset themselves before returning to class. The intent of these rooms is to help prevent escalations in behavior by allowing students the space to regulate their emotional responses. In New Mexico, wellness rooms exist in many schools, often staffed by an educational assistant or other school personnel who can then refer students to more intensive interventions—such as mental or behavioral health professionals—if needed.

Youth Suicide. Data shows youth suicide and suicidal behavior is increasing in New Mexico and across the United States. New Mexico uses the New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey ([NM YRRS](#)) to assess the health risk behaviors and resiliency of New Mexico secondary students through a survey administered to a selection of schools in each school district in the fall of even numbered years. NM YRRS is part of the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Youth Risk and Behavior Surveillance system ([U.S. YRBS](#)), allowing for comparisons between New Mexico and national data.

As illustrated by the graph below, youth suicide attempts in New Mexico have consistently outpaced the nation, even before the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2019, New Mexico’s suicide attempt



rate among students in grades nine through 12 was 10.5 percent, compared to the national rate of 8.9 percent.

The New Mexico Department of Health (DOH)—which administers NM YRRS—reports that in 2019, suicide was the leading cause of death for youth aged 13-17 in New Mexico. In DOH’s most recent [State of Mental Health in New Mexico 2022](#) report, which provides detailed information about the mental health of New Mexico residents, the department notes suicide attempts are associated with depression and other mental health issues. DOH’s 2024 quarter three mental health surveillance [report](#) recorded youth emergency department visits in the state between July 1, 2024, and September 30, 2024. During this period, there were 1,467 mental health-related visits by youth to emergency departments and 119 visits related to a suicide attempt.

Youth Mental Health, School Climate, and Social Emotional Learning. Wellness rooms are one strategy employed by schools across the United States to support efforts to establish a relationship-centered, mental health-conscious school climate. According to the [CDC](#), children who are mentally healthy have improved quality of life; can function well at home, in school, and in their communities; and are better able to cope with challenges. [Research](#) suggests schools should create positive school climates that center strong relationships and integrate social emotional learning (SEL). The Social Emotional Learning Alliance for the United States defines SEL as the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to develop healthy identities, manage emotions, achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain a range of supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

PED would need to develop a process through which the suicide prevention partner organization and a separate method to identify the sites of the 14 mental health rooms. According to PED, HB58 would not have any additional administrative burden on the agency beyond their existing operations.

Local districts would need to incorporate the suicide prevention training provided by PED and the partner organization into their professional development curriculum. Districts operating the 14 mental health rooms would also need to dedicate district resources to support the initiative.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Behavioral Health Staffing. The majority of the behavioral health workforce in New Mexico schools is comprised of school counselors, followed by social workers. According to the most recent data available from a 2020 [survey](#) of behavioral health services offered within schools, the ratio of students to school counselors, psychologists, and social workers in New Mexico are significantly higher than nationally recommended ratios.

LESC Interim Site Visits. During the 2024 interim, LESL staff visited Raton Schools, Silver Consolidated Schools, Los Lunas Schools, and the School of Dreams Academy as part of a study on school safety approaches in the state. Both Raton Schools and Silver Consolidated Schools have implemented wellness rooms in their high schools to support broader restorative practices for discipline, climate, and student wellbeing.

RELATED BILLS

Related to Senate Bill 238, Youth Behavioral Health Prevention Project, which would direct PED to contract with a provider of a multicomponent digital youth behavioral health platform.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files
- LFC Files
- Public Schools Facilities Authority (PSFA)
- Health Care Authority (HCA)
- Department of Health (DOH)
- Public Education Department (PED)

CLH/nd/mca/jkh