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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
54th Legislature, 1st Session, 2019

Bill Number	<u>HB238/aHEC</u>	Sponsor	<u>Ruiloba</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.211781.1</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>HHHC/HEC</u>
Short Title	<u>Childhood Trauma Awareness Training Act</u>		
Analyst	<u>Terrazas</u>	Original Date	<u>1/31/19</u>
		Last Updated	<u>3/7/19</u>

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of HEC Amendment

The House Education Committee Amendment to House Bill 238 (HB238/aHEC) removes language that would require training on the effects of childhood trauma to be completed annually. The amendment reduces the duration of the training courses from six and one-half hours per school year to at least two hours per semester for a minimum of four hours per school year. Newly hired school district or charter school employee would be required to attend a six-hour training course during their first semester of employment. The amendment would require every “appropriate” school employee to receive the training, instead of every employee. Further, school districts with multiple public schools may develop actions plans to prioritize training for employees based on each public school’s at-risk student population and relevant professional staff to support continuous practice. A public school with an average suspension rate of five percent or more over the most recent three years would be required to undergo training regardless of its at-risk program units. In their plans to prioritize training, school districts and charter schools would be required to consider how they would conduct training once in the fall semester and once in the spring semester.

Synopsis of Original Bill

House Bill 238 (HB238) would establish the *Childhood Trauma Awareness Training Act*, requiring school districts and charter schools that generate at-risk program units to train school employees annually, beginning in the 2020-2021 school year, on the effects of childhood trauma on student achievement and social development. The bill defines “childhood trauma” as adverse childhood experiences that impede brain development, learning, and appropriate socialization.

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill does not contain an appropriation.

School districts and charter schools may incur costs associated with providing training for hourly employees.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

HB238/aHEC would require school districts and charter schools that generate at-risk program units to develop an action plan to train every “appropriate” school employee in childhood trauma awareness. The bill would require training to be at least two hours per semester for a total of four hours per school year, provided that newly hired employees would be required to attend a six-hour course during their first semester of employment. School districts with multiple public schools may develop actions plans to prioritize training for employees based on each public school’s at-risk student population and relevant professional staff to support continuous practice. A public school with an average suspension rate of five percent or more over the most recent three years would be required to undergo training regardless of its at-risk program units. In their plans to prioritize training, school districts and charter schools would be required to consider how they would conduct training once in the fall semester and once in the spring semester.

The bill would allow a school district and charter school, alone or with other school districts or charter schools that are demographically similar, and regional education cooperatives to use trainers certified by the Public Education Department (PED) to develop and conduct childhood trauma awareness training programs approved by PED. To be approved by PED, childhood trauma awareness training programs would need to educate school employees on the types of poverty in the state and their effects on social and academic development; delineate the demographic groups within school districts and schools; provide research-based strategies on engaging students and families in the educational process; and mitigate the effects of childhood poverty on students. Further, the program would need to assist school districts and charter schools in developing the annual action plan that addresses specific needs of students experiencing childhood trauma and implement ongoing professional development for school employees that is intensive, job-embedded, collaborative, data-driven, classroom-focused, and sustainable.

Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) provides poverty awareness training to their Title I schools through a national program associated with a private business, with costs over \$150 thousand. The APS training includes a full day of professional development for school teams of up to 12 members, who must develop action plans for their school communities. Additional support, including whole school training if requested, is available throughout the school year.

According to the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), children can experience many different sorts of trauma, which can be significant risk factors for poor health, academic failure, and poor quality of life. The Adverse Childhood Experience Study (ACE Study) examined the prevalence and impact of such childhood trauma by tracking more than 17 thousand participants 19 years old and older. The most commonly experienced childhood traumas, in order of prevalence are physical abuse (28 percent), residence in households with substance abuse (27 percent), emotional neglect (25 percent), parental separation or divorce (24 percent), sexual abuse (21 percent), family members with mental illness (20 percent), and witnessing domestic violence (13 percent). At least 66 percent of ACE Study participants reported at least one such trauma, with 20 percent reporting three or more. As the number of childhood adverse experiences (ACEs) increase, so does the risk for negative outcomes, such as alcohol abuse, poor work performance, and unintended pregnancies. Trauma’s potential impact on education include developmental delays, higher dropout, suspension and expulsion rates, lower academic achievement, higher rates of special education referrals, and adverse effects on concentration and memory. It is important to note all ACE Study participants were mostly Caucasian, middle- and upper-middle class, college-educated, and all had jobs and healthcare. The prevalence of ACEs is likely to be higher in other, more disadvantaged populations.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

PED indicates the department would need to amend the New Mexico Administrative Code to reflect the requirement of the training programs. PED also notes the department would need to work with stakeholders and health and wellness experts to determine the criteria for qualified childhood trauma awareness training programs and trainers. In 2017, PED initiated a training program for charter school governing body members that similarly required approval of trainers and included initial and continuing training requirements. While such training is topically different, PED may be able to build off the existing structure and process of the charter school governing body training program.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

The long title of the bill indicates school districts and charter schools that receive at-risk program units would be required to include information with their operating budgets that details specific services, including childhood trauma awareness training, that were provided in the prior school year and are provided in the current school year to improve the academic success of a-risk students. However, this provision is not noted anywhere else in the bill.

RELATED BILLS

HB236, Attendance for Success Act, would provide additional education opportunities to students struggling with attendance.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files
- Public Education Department (PED)

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