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

<b>Bill Number</b>	<u>HB615/HECS</u>	<b>Sponsor</b>	<u>HEC</u>
<b>Tracking Number</b>	<u>.214448.2</u>	<b>Committee Referrals</b>	<u>HEC/ HSEIC</u>
<b>Short Title</b>	<u>Mental Health Training for Education Staff</u>		
<b>Analyst</b>	<u>Stiles</u>	<b>Original Date</b>	<u>3/4/19</u>
		<b>Last Updated</b>	<u></u>

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**BILL SUMMARY**

Synopsis of Bill

The House Education Committee Substitute to HB615 (HB615/HECS) would create the “mental health training pilot project,” a two year pilot project in the Gadsden Independent School District (GISD). The pilot project would be designed to train all public school personnel, including ancillary staff, instructional support providers, and volunteers in several areas regarding mental health. The pilot project would require the school district to regularly provide opportunities for students’ parents, siblings, and other family members to take part in such trainings. The pilot project would require the district, in consultation with the Public Education Department (PED), the Children Youth and Families Department (CYFD), and the Human Services Department (HSD) to develop locally sourced training materials to effectuate the training.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

HB615/HECS appropriates \$30 thousand from the general fund to PED for expenditure in FY20 and subsequent fiscal years to provide GISD with supplies, materials, and trainers to support and effectuate the mental health training pilot project. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall not revert to the general fund.

HB615/HECS specifies the appropriation is to provide GISD with supplies, materials, and trainers for the pilot project, however there is no appropriation for staff time to develop the pilot project or to create materials, and there is no funding for GISD personnel to be paid for training hours. There is also no funding for the resources PED, CYFD, or HSD may be required to contribute to the pilot project.

**SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES**

HB615/HECS would require GISC, in consultation with PED, to design a pilot project which would require all public school personnel to receive annual training regarding early identification of social, emotional, and behavioral problems, or substance use disorders and the provisions of early intervention services; techniques and supports needed to early identify those children with

trauma histories and children with, or at risk of, mental illness; the use of referral processes that link children and families to appropriate treatment and intervention services in the school and community and the processes to follow up with CYFD when the services are not available; strategies that promote a school wide positive environment; and strategies for promoting the social, emotional, mental, and behavioral health of all students.

The pilot project would be required to be designed to require the district to provide opportunities for students’ parents, siblings, and other family members to attend similar trainings similar to those provided for all public school personnel in the form of classes, workshops, seminars, or community health events.

The pilot project created by HB615/HECS would require GISD, in consultation with PED, CYFD, and HSD to develop locally sourced training materials to effectuate the trainings including materials for the public school personnel trainings, and for the family training opportunities. The materials would be required to address programs and activities related to mental health; eating disorders; suicide prevention; behavioral health disorders; safe techniques to de-escalate crisis situations; identification of signs and symptoms of early stages of mental illness and behavioral health issues; and the use of evidence-based practices and programs, including mental health first aid or core elements of similar programs.

HB615/HECS would require GISD and PED to provide annual reports to the appropriate interim legislative body. The bill would also require a final report at the end of the pilot project to be submitted to the governor and the Legislature. HB615/HECS includes language which would remove liability from GISD, PED and school personnel, and would remove any possibility of any cause of action under the training program.

The pilot project created by HB615/HECS would require GISD, PED, CYFD, and HSD to develop course materials on a broad range of topics for the trainings required by the pilot project; however, the materials the project requires the agencies to develop do not clearly align with all of the topics of training the project would require.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS**

HB615/HECS would require GISD in consultation with PED to design, implement, and oversee the mental health training pilot project for all public school employees, and to also develop and provide mental health trainings for students’ families. The bill would further require GISD to work with PED, CYFD, and HSD to provide materials to effectuate the training.

## **TECHNICAL ISSUES**

HB615/HECS requires the two-year pilot project to include training for all public school personnel. The sponsor may consider changing the wording to “all district school personnel” if the intent of the bill is to provide training only to GISD personnel.

## **OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES**

According to the National Association of School Psychologist, children can experience many different sorts of trauma, which can be significant risk factors for poor health, academic failure, and poor quality of life. 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.

The Education Commission of the States indicate many states have incorporated social-emotional learning into their education standards, often linking social-emotional learning to health or physical education. Massachusetts requires all schools to develop action plans for creating safe and supportive environments using a prescribed assessment tool and framework, while Vermont requires the secretary of education to develop a plan for creating a trauma-informed school system throughout Vermont.

### **RELATED BILLS**

HB238 would establish the Childhood Trauma Awareness Training Act, requiring school districts and charter schools that generate at-risk program units to annually train school employees on the effects of childhood trauma on student achievement and social development.

HB591 would require PED to integrate mental, social, and emotional health strategies, skills, and techniques into all general and special education instruction. The bill would also require curriculum for a school wide focus on mental health.

### **SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

- LESC Files

**AMS/mc/mhg**