

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 1373

As Passed House:
February 25, 2021

Title: An act relating to promoting student access to information about behavioral health resources.

Brief Description: Promoting student access to information about behavioral health resources.

Sponsors: House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Callan, Steele, Ortiz-Self, Dolan, Johnson, J., Slatter, Bergquist, Leavitt, Davis, Fey, Simmons, Berry, Thai, Wicks, Ryu, Kloba, Chambers, Berg, Wylie, Santos, Paul, Ormsby, Ramel, Macri, Pollet, Morgan and Harris-Talley).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/2/21, 2/9/21 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/25/21, 93-5.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires public schools to post contact information for behavioral health organizations on their website home pages and to post corresponding information on social media websites used by the school district.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Ybarra, Ranking Minority Member; Berg, Bergquist, Callan, McEntire, Ortiz-Self, Rude, Steele and Stonier.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the United States Department of Health and Human Services defines "behavioral health" as the promotion of mental health, resilience and wellbeing; the treatment of mental and substance use disorders; and the support of those who experience and/or are in recovery from these conditions, along with their families and communities.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction maintains resources and programs intended to support the mental, social, and behavioral health needs of students, including programs on:

- youth suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention;
- substance use prevention and intervention; and
- lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth.

Behavioral health issues have also been addressed through recent legislation. For example, legislation adopted in 2016 (Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 2439, enacted as Chapter 96, Laws of 2016) established the Children's Mental Health Work Group (work group) and directed it to identify barriers to accessing mental health services for children and families, and advise the Legislature on statewide mental health services for this population.

Recommendations from the work group resulted in legislation that authorized a two-year regional behavioral health pilot project between June 2017 and June 2019. The 2019 pilot project final report included recommendations focused on increasing student access to behavioral health services.

Additionally, legislation adopted in 2020 (Substitute House Bill 2589, enacted as Chapter 39, Laws of 2020) required public schools and institutions of higher education to include contact information for suicide prevention organizations on student and staff identification cards.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Within existing resources, every public school that maintains a website must publish onto the home page of that website the following information:

- the website address and phone number for one or more national suicide prevention organizations;
- the website address and phone number for one or more local, state, or national organizations specializing in suicide prevention or crisis intervention;
- the website address and phone number for one or more local, state, or national organizations specializing in depression, anxiety, or counseling;

- the website address and phone number for one or more local, state, or national organizations specializing in eating disorders; and
- the website address and phone number for one or more local, state, or national organizations specializing in substance abuse.

Public schools must also post information on social media websites used by the school district for the purpose of notifying students, families, and the public of the behavioral health resources published on website home pages. The social media postings must occur multiple times each year and no less than quarterly.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill was requested by the Legislative Youth Advisory Council. Substitute House Bill 2589 from 2020 required schools to add crisis organization information on student identification cards. Behavioral health issues and needs have skyrocketed. This bill responds to youth requests, provides resources, and destigmatizes behavioral issues that are part of life. Policymakers should give youth what they are asking for and what they need.

The bill is a necessary step in mitigating the behavioral health needs of students. Students throughout the state have identified the issues of the bill as a top priority. Data indicates that isolation and anxiety resulting from the pandemic is affecting students.

Mental health is very important for students and the pandemic has made mental health issues more urgent. This bill will provide resources for all students and can be implemented without cost. Suicides are surrounding students and they are in a mental health crisis. Adding resources to websites is not enough, but it is an important first step. Society has a moral duty to do more to support students in crisis.

Mental health, wellness, and suicide prevention are top priorities. Suicide is a leading cause of death for students in Washington. The pandemic has exacerbated suicide and substance abuse, and vaping use is up. The bill should be amended to include information about the safe storage of guns.

Not all schools will list the comprehensive resources contemplated by this bill. Not all parents who check the school's website will also check the school district's website. Students are struggling with significant absences and dramatic grade declines.

Mental health is an important concern on higher education campuses, but the issues for students begin before college. Students in crisis do not know who to contact, and access to information should not be a barrier to getting help.

This bill will help students who need resources but who are not reaching out to adults. Students who are struggling are not likely to talk with trusted adults during a time of crisis. Lawmakers should make crisis information resources available to students.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Callan, prime sponsor; Kellen Hoard, Legislative Youth Advisory Council; Sierra Owens, Washington State School Directors' Association and Riverview School District; Seth Dawson, Washington Association for Substance Abuse and Violence Prevention; Tanya Aggar, Washington State PTA; Zaina Ibrahim; Sarnika Ali; and Phoebe Walker, Associated Students of the University of Washington-Seattle.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.