WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2023 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 3536

By Delegates Storch, Howell, and Westfall

[Introduced February 14, 2023; Referred to the Committee on Health and Human Resources]

A BILL to amend and reenact §18-2-40 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended; and to amend and reenact §18B-1B-7 of said code, all relating to suicide prevention awareness and dissemination of information concerning the same.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

CHAPTER 18. EDUCATION

ARTICLE 2. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

§18-2-40. Suicide prevention awareness training; dissemination of information.

(a)(1) Legislative findings. — The Legislature recognizes that the state of West Virginia has one of the highest rates of suicide in the nation, and that suicide serves as one of the leading causes of death in our state.

(2) The Legislature further finds that nationwide, suicide rates amongst adolescents and young adults are on the rise. As a result of disrupted families, poverty, and the opioid crises which have severely affected a significant number of families across this state, West Virginia’s students face a number of issues which may increase their risk of suicide.

(3) Consequently, the Legislature finds that it is imperative that those in our education system closest to our students receive training to increase their ability to better recognize students who may be exhibiting signs that they are at risk of suicide.

(b) Each year and every year thereafter ~~On or before September 1, 2020, and each year thereafter~~, the State Board of Education shall provide for the routine education of all professional educators, including principals and administrators, and those service personnel having direct contact with students on warning signs and resources to assist in suicide prevention under guidelines established by the state board. ~~The education may be accomplished through self-review of suicide prevention materials and resources approved by the state board.~~

(c) Each annual school year and every year thereafter ~~On or before September 1, 2020, and each year thereafter~~, a public middle and high school administrator shall disseminate and provide opportunities to discuss suicide prevention awareness information to all middle and high school students. The information may be obtained from the Bureau for Behavioral Health and Health Facilities or from a commercially developed suicide prevention training program approved by the State Board of Education in consultation with the bureau to assure the accuracy and appropriateness of the information.

(d) Commencing one year from the date of reenactment of this section in the 2023 regular session of the Legislature, a public school that serves students in grades 6 to 12, inclusive, and that issues student identification cards shall have printed on either side of the student identification cards the information for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, which can be reached by calling or texting 988; and shall have printed on either side of the student identification cards the information for the Crisis Text Line, which can be accessed by texting HOME to 741741, to disseminate and make accessible information on national suicide prevention resources.

~~(d)~~(e) The provisions of this section shall be known as Jamie’s Law.

CHAPTER 18B. HIGHER EDUCATION.

ARTICLE 1B. HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY COMMISSION.

§18B-1B-7. Student mental health policies; suicide prevention.

(a) Each public and private institution of higher education shall develop and implement a policy to advise students and staff on suicide prevention programs available on and off campus that includes, but is not limited to:

(1) Crisis intervention access, which includes information for national, state, and local suicide prevention hotlines;

(2) Mental health program access, which provides information on the availability of local mental health clinics, student health services, and counseling services;

(3) Multimedia application access, which includes crisis hotline contact information, suicide warning signs, resources offered, and free-of-cost applications;

(4) Student communication plans, which consist of creating outreach plans regarding educational and outreach activities on suicide prevention; and

(5) Post intervention plans which include creating a strategic plan to communicate effectively with students, staff, and parents after the loss of a student to suicide.

(b) Each public and private institution of higher education shall provide all incoming students with information about depression and suicide prevention resources available to students. The information provided to students shall include available mental health services and other support services, including student-run organizations for individuals at risk of or affected by suicide.

(c) The information prescribed by subsection (a), subdivisions (1) through (4) of this section shall be posted on the website of each institution of higher education in this state.

(d) Any applicable free-of-cost prevention materials or programs shall be posted on the websites of the public and private institutions of higher education, the Higher Education Policy Commission, and the West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education.

(e) Commencing one year from the date of reenactment of this section in the 2023 regular session of the Legislature, a public or private institute of higher education that issues student identification cards shall have printed on either side of the student identification cards the information for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, which can be reached by calling or texting 988; and shall have printed on either side of the student identification cards the information for the Crisis Text Line, which can be accessed by texting HOME to 741741, to disseminate and make accessible information on national suicide prevention resources.

(f) The provisions of this section shall be known as "Jamie’s Law."

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to update the code concerning suicide prevention awareness and dissemination of information concerning the same.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.