

Committee on Children JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5146

Title: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION PILOT PROGRAM.

Vote Date: 3/10/2020

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/18/2020

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Committee on Children

REASONS FOR BILL:

To have the Department of Children and Families and the Office of the Child Advocate to create and maintain a youth suicide prevention pilot program.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Vannessa Dorantes, Commissioner; Department of Children and Families

Supports the intent of the bill but states that the language needs clarification. The Department and several state and community partners have been on the forefront of youth suicide prevention and training for the last several years. An integral part of that practice is our participation in and support of the CT Suicide Advisory Board.

If state funding is made available to support a youth suicide prevention curriculum, we should not be creating a new training program but rather focus on the already existing evidence-based curricula listed above. More specifically, the legislature would get the most out of its investment by supporting QPR training across the state. Current funding streams for youth suicide prevention activities do not include any state dollars, but rather are federal grant dollars through the Garrett Lee Smith Suicide Prevention Grant, the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant and the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant. Those dollars help support evidence-based prevention trainings, community services and suicide prevention materials, such as our “1 Word, 1 Voice, 1 Life” campaign

Steven Hernandez; Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity

Supports this legislation as it continues the work of the SEL and School Climate Collaborative, which has been tasked with developing an assessment for screening students

in grades 3 through 12 to determine whether such students are at risk for suicide. Between 2018 and 2019, the youth suicide rate in Connecticut doubled. Research has shown that depression and other mental health disorders have been shown to be increasing in youth, this legislation can help figure that out.

Sarah Eagan; Office of Child Advocate

The Office of the Child Advocate supports this legislation. Between January 2001 and December 2019, Connecticut has lost 165 children to suicide. Boys accounted for 61% of those suicide deaths and girls accounted for 39%. For the past 8 years, girls have been dying at a similar rate as boys. Although the numbers are small relative to the total population. Youth suicide has a devastating impact to the youth's family, school, and community, and the ripple effect of each tragedy cannot be overstated. Suicides in the state of Connecticut have been on the rise and this would help increase suicide prevention and training but needs a funding source.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Barbara A. Lockhart; Connecticut Youth Services Association

Supports this legislation and looks forward to continuing its working relationship with the Department of Children and Families. Is thankful that the committee added them in the language.

Howard Sovronsky, Chief Behavioral Health Officer at Connecticut Children's Medical Center

Howard strongly supports this bill which will provide training and clear referral protocols for those staff who interact most with our children and adolescents. Sensitizing youth workers, school personnel, youth service bureaus, youth athletic programs, and employees of municipal social service agencies, will provide individuals with the tools necessary to engage in early identification and referral in an effort to prevent the life changing actions taken by a child who is distraught, depressed, and consumed with thoughts of harming themselves.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Peter Murszewski

Date: 3/21/2020