

HOUSE BILL NO. 383

INTRODUCED BY M. DUNWELL

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A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE MONTANA STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING PILOT PROGRAM; PROVIDING A PROGRAM DESCRIPTION; PROVIDING RULEMAKING AUTHORITY; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE AND A TERMINATION DATE."

WHEREAS, Montana has an intolerably high youth suicide rate of more than twice the national average; and

WHEREAS, too often, suicide warning signs are undetected by those close to a young person contemplating suicide; and

WHEREAS, while the stigma surrounding mental illness has been reduced by the laudable efforts of individuals and organizations in Montana, this stigma remains a barrier to improving the mental health of Montanans; and

WHEREAS, the legislatively created Montana suicide review team has reported that screening for depression in Montana schools is a promising intervention to better identify those at risk for suicide.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

NEW SECTION. Section 1. Montana student mental health screening pilot program. (1) There is a Montana student mental health screening pilot program. The program is established to encourage school districts to offer optional mental health screening for students.

(2) The office of public instruction shall administer the program in consultation with the state suicide prevention coordinator and the Montana suicide review team.

(3) The office of public instruction shall award grants to school districts to offer or contract for optional mental health screenings for students and to ensure that students have the opportunity to receive services following the screenings.

(4) In awarding grants, the office of public instruction shall prioritize grants to districts that:

(a) have a procedure in place that ensures all staff are prepared to address youth in crisis;



- 1 (b) plan to coordinate with community or regional partners to ensure that students identified as needing
2 services receive the services;
- 3 (c) plan to use a best practice screening tool as determined by the office of public instruction;
- 4 (d) display community support for the program;
- 5 (e) include a detailed budget that:
- 6 (i) minimizes administrative costs and costs per student screened; and
- 7 (ii) provides a plan to ensure that a student receives necessary followup services regardless of the
8 student's or the student's family's ability to pay;
- 9 (f) commit to screenings of students being optional to parents through an opt-in model; and
- 10 (g) include a plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the screening program.
- 11 (5) The legislature intends that funds be distributed by the office of public instruction so that awarded
12 districts are able to offer mental health screening and services during the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school
13 years.
- 14 (6) The office of public instruction shall adopt rules as necessary to implement the Montana student
15 mental health screening pilot program.
- 16 (7) (a) Districts awarded grant funds shall report to the office by April 15, 2016, on implementation of the
17 program.
- 18 (b) The office of public instruction shall compile the district reports and present its findings to the
19 education and local government interim committee by July 1, 2016, so that the committee can consider possible
20 recommendations for the program to the 65th legislature.
- 21 (8) Districts awarded grant funds shall ensure compliance with all state and federal laws regarding privacy
22 of student records.

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24 **NEW SECTION. Section 2. Appropriation.** There is appropriated from the state general fund to the
25 office of public instruction \$1 million for the biennium beginning July 1, 2015, for the purposes described in
26 [section 1]. Any remaining funds that are unencumbered as of June 30, 2017, must revert to the general fund.

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28 **NEW SECTION. Section 3. Codification instruction.** [Section 1] is intended to be codified as an
29 integral part of Title 20, chapter 5, part 4, and the provisions of Title 20, chapter 5, part 4, apply to [section 1].

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1 COORDINATION SECTION. **Section 4. Coordination instruction.** If both House Bill No. 2 and [this
2 act] are passed and approved and if House Bill No. 2 contains an appropriation for youth mental health screening,
3 then [section 2 of this act] is void.

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5 NEW SECTION. **Section 5. Effective date.** [This act] is effective on passage and approval.

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7 NEW SECTION. **Section 6. Termination.** [This act] terminates June 30, 2017.

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