

HOUSE BILL NO. 186

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 EFFECTIVE DATES 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 included depression screening for children ages 11 to 17 as one of its top recommendations in its 2016 final report.

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.

(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 a student identified as needing  
2 follow-up services receives the services regardless of the ability to pay of the student or the student's family;

3 (c) plan to use a best practice screening tool for students who are 11 years of age or older as determined  
4 by the office of public instruction;

5 (d) display community support for the program;

6 (e) include a detailed budget that minimizes administrative costs and costs per student screened; and

7 (f) include a plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the screening program.

8 (5) The legislature intends that funds be distributed by the office of public instruction so that awarded  
9 districts are able to offer mental health screening and services during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school  
10 years.

11 (6) The office of public instruction shall adopt rules as necessary to implement the Montana student  
12 mental health screening pilot program.

13 (7) (a) Districts awarded grant funds shall report to the office of public instruction by April 15, 2020, on  
14 implementation of the program.

15 (b) The office of public instruction shall compile the district reports and present its findings to the  
16 education interim committee by July 1, 2020, so that the committee can consider possible recommendations for  
17 the program to the 67th legislature.

18 (8) Districts awarded grant funds shall ensure compliance with all state and federal laws regarding privacy  
19 of student records.

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21 **NEW SECTION. Section 2. Appropriation.** There is appropriated \$1 million from the state general fund  
22 to the office of public instruction for the biennium beginning July 1, 2019, for the purposes described in [section  
23 1]. Any remaining funds that are unencumbered as of June 30, 2021, must revert to the general fund.

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25 **NEW SECTION. Section 3. Codification instruction.** [Section 1] is intended to be codified as an  
26 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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28 **COORDINATION SECTION. Section 4. Coordination instruction.** If both House Bill No. 2 and [this  
29 act] are passed and approved and if House Bill No. 2 contains an appropriation for youth mental health screening,  
30 then [section 2 of this act] is void.

