

House Bill 1064

By: Representatives Schofield of the 63rd, Scott of the 76th, and Davis of the 87th

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

1 To amend Article 6 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, the
2 "Quality Basic Education Act," so as to provide for trauma informed school counselors in
3 Georgia's public schools; to provide for the repeal of provisions for state funding for school
4 counselors; to provide for state funding for one trauma informed school counselor for every
5 150 full-time equivalent students; to provide for duties and responsibilities of trauma
6 informed school counselors; to require the Professional Standards Commission to create a
7 professional trauma informed school counselor endorsement for eligible certificated
8 professional personnel; to provide for eligibility of individuals to receive such endorsement;
9 to provide for eligibility for professional trauma informed school counselor programs; to
10 provide for assessing the fidelity of training and implementation for individuals who receive
11 such endorsement; to provide for related matters; to provide for a short title; to provide for
12 an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

13 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

14 **SECTION 1.**

15 This Act shall be known and may be cited as the "Trauma Informed School Counselors Act."

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SECTION 2.

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Article 6 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, the "Quality Basic Education Act," is amended in Part 5, relating to program weights and funding requirements, by revising subsection (c) and adding a new subsection to Code Section 20-2-182, relating to program weights to reflect funds for payment of salaries and benefits, maximum class size, reporting requirements, and application to specific school years, to read as follows:

"(c) The program weights for the kindergarten, kindergarten early intervention, primary, primary grades early intervention, upper elementary, upper elementary grades early intervention, middle school, and alternative education programs and the program weights for the high school programs authorized pursuant to paragraph (4) of subsection (b) of Code Section 20-2-151, when multiplied by the base amount, shall reflect sufficient funds to pay the beginning salaries for at least one school counselor for every 450 full-time equivalent students. Beginning in Fiscal Year 2015 and thereafter, the program weights for the English for speakers of other languages program and the programs for persons with disabilities shall also earn school counselor funding. Further, beginning in Fiscal Year 2016 and thereafter, the program weights for the program for intellectually gifted students and the remedial education program shall also earn school counselor funding. The duties and responsibilities for such school counselors shall be established by the state board to require a minimum of five of the six full-time equivalent program count segments of the counselor's time to be spent counseling or advising students or parents. This subsection shall stand repealed and reserved on July 1, 2026."

"(c.2)(1) As used in this subsection, the term 'trauma informed school counselor' means a certificated professional personnel with a professional trauma informed school counseling endorsement provided for in Code Section 20-2-209.2.

(2) Beginning in Fiscal Year 2027 and thereafter, the program weights for the kindergarten, kindergarten early intervention, primary, primary grades early intervention,

43 upper elementary, upper elementary grades early intervention, middle school, alternative
44 education programs, high school programs authorized pursuant to paragraph (4) of
45 subsection (b) of Code Section 20-2-151, English for speakers of other languages,
46 persons with disabilities, for intellectually gifted students, and remedial education
47 programs, when multiplied by the base amount, shall reflect sufficient funds to pay the
48 beginning salaries for at least one trauma informed school counselor for every 150
49 full-time equivalent students. The duties and responsibilities for such trauma informed
50 counselors shall be established by the state board to require a minimum of five of the six
51 full-time equivalent program count segments of the trauma informed counselor's time to
52 be spent counseling or advising students or parents."

53 **SECTION 3.**

54 Said article is further amended in Subpart 1 of Part 6, relating to certificated professional
55 personnel, by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

56 "20-2-209.2.

57 (a) As used in this Code section, the term:

58 (1) 'Trauma' means the result of an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that
59 is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and
60 that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and physical, social,
61 emotional, or spiritual well-being.

62 (2) 'Trauma informed counseling' means an approach to providing mental health support
63 and counseling services that recognizes the impact of trauma on individuals and seeks to
64 create a safe and supportive environment that promotes healing and resilience.

65 (b) No later than December 31, 2024, the Professional Standards Commission, in
66 consultation with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities,
67 shall create a professional trauma informed counseling endorsement for eligible certificated
68 professional personnel who elect to complete a trauma informed counseling program which

69 meets the minimum requirements provided in subsection (d) of this Code section and which
70 is approved by the Professional Standards Commission.

71 (c) All eligible certificated professional personnel, as determined pursuant to rules and
72 regulations of the Professional Standards Commission, who are employed in a public
73 school in this state, complete a professional trauma informed counseling program approved
74 by the Professional Standards Commission, and provide to the Professional Standards
75 Commission verification of such completion from an approved provider shall receive the
76 professional trauma informed counseling endorsement.

77 (d) To be eligible for approval by the Professional Standards Commission, a professional
78 trauma informed counseling program shall, at a minimum, cover the following topics:

79 (1) Recognizing different types of trauma in school-age children and evaluating the
80 impact of trauma on their daily functioning;

81 (2) Assessing for trauma related symptoms in school-age children;

82 (3) Understanding how traumatic experiences influence personal identity for school-age
83 children and their ability to maintain healthy relationships;

84 (4) Understanding cultural competency, developing the ability to work with students
85 from diverse backgrounds, and being aware of how cultural differences may impact
86 trauma experiences and healing;

87 (5) Providing trauma-sensitive mental health support and counseling services to
88 school-age children to foster lasting change;

89 (6) Helping school-age children process present trauma while addressing core trauma
90 from the past;

91 (7) Helping school-age children develop a clear understanding of techniques for
92 emotional stabilization and positive self-care;

93 (8) Helping school-age children understand personal agency, achieve resiliency, and
94 create external anchors in the face of adversity; and

95 (9) Understanding that collaboration with other school personnel, including, but not
96 limited to, teachers, school administrators, and school psychologists, is essential in
97 providing comprehensive support to students who have experienced trauma.
98 (e) The Professional Standards Commission, in consultation with the Department of
99 Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, shall establish measures to assess the
100 fidelity of training and implementation for individuals who receive the professional trauma
101 informed counseling endorsement."

102 **SECTION 4.**

103 This Act shall become effective upon its approval by the Governor or upon its becoming law
104 without such approval.

105 **SECTION 5.**

106 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.