

# LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE

[First Reprint]

## SENATE, No. 503

### STATE OF NEW JERSEY 220th LEGISLATURE

DATED: JULY 8, 2022

#### SUMMARY

- Synopsis:** Requires institutions of higher education to implement suicide prevention programs and raise awareness of mental health services.
- Type of Impact:** Potential expenditure increase for public institutions of higher education.
- Agencies Affected:** Public Institutions of Higher Education.

#### Office of Legislative Services Estimate

<b>Fiscal Impact</b>	<b><u>Year 1</u></b>	<b><u>Year 2</u></b>	<b><u>Year 3</u></b>
<b>Potential Cost Increase for Public Institutions of Higher Education</b>		Indeterminate	

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) concludes that this bill may cause an indeterminate increase in expenditures for some institutions of higher education associated with the requirement that individuals with training and experience in mental health issues will be responsible for, in addition to their responsibilities required under current law, working with faculty and staff of the institution of higher education on recognizing the signs of depression and referral of students to crisis hotlines and mental health screenings and to provide annual training on these topics.
- The OLS concludes that there could be additional costs specific to four-year institutions of higher education which, under the bill, are required to provide all students who serve as resident assistants with annual training on the signs of depression, the warning signs and risk factors associated with college student suicide, the referral of students to campus mental health resources, and responding to students in crisis.
- The OLS concludes that there could be additional costs for institutions of higher education associated with conducting the mental health public awareness campaign, posting crisis hotline information in required locations around campus, and establishing a mental health crisis assessment and response plan, if they do not already do so.

## **BILL DESCRIPTION**

Under current State law, institutions of higher education are required to have individuals with training and experience in mental health issues who focus on reducing student suicides and attempted suicides available on campus or remotely by telephone or other means for students 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The individuals also work with faculty and staff on ways to recognize the warning signs and risk factors associated with student suicide. This bill amends current law to additionally require the individuals to work with faculty and staff on recognizing the signs of depression and on the referral of students to crisis hotlines and mental health screenings and to provide annual training on all of these topics. The bill provides that the institution would post the crisis hotline numbers in each dormitory, library, and student center, as well as any other facility or area on campus that the institution deems appropriate.

The bill also provides that four-year institution of higher education will require all students who serve as resident assistants to receive annual training on the signs of depression, the warning signs and risk factors associated with college student suicide, the referral of students to campus mental health resources, and responding to students in crisis.

Additionally, the bill requires institutions of higher education to annually conduct a mental health public awareness campaign on campus designed to provide students with information on depression and suicide, raise awareness of the mental health services available on and off campus, and reduce the stigma associated with seeking mental health services.

Finally, the bill requires the president of an institution, or a designee, to establish a mental health crisis assessment and response plan to act as the official protocol to be used by campus staff, faculty, and in the case of four-year institutions, resident assistants, to identify, assess, and respond to a student who is experiencing a mental health crisis.

## **FISCAL ANALYSIS**

### ***EXECUTIVE BRANCH***

None received.

### ***OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES***

The OLS concludes that the bill may lead to an indeterminate increase in expenditures among institutions of higher education to the extent that the institutions do not currently meet the requirements of the bill. The potential expenditure increase would be associated with the requirement that individuals with training and experience in mental health issues will be responsible for working with, and providing annual training to, faculty and staff of the institution on recognizing the signs of depression and the referral of students to crisis hotlines and mental health screenings. For institutions where these individuals do not already perform these extra duties, there could be additional costs.

The OLS concludes that there could also be additional costs for institutions of higher education associated with annually conducting the mental health public awareness campaign, establishing a mental health crisis assessment and response plan, and posting crisis hotline information in the required locations on campus, to the extent that the institutions do not already do so.

The OLS also concludes that there could be additional costs specific to four-year institutions of higher education which, under the bill, are required to provide all students who serve as resident assistants with annual training on the signs of depression, the warning signs and risk factors

associated with college student suicide, the referral of students to campus mental health services, and ways to respond to students in crisis, if such training is not already provided to resident assistants.

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This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).