

ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

SENATE, No. 528

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 16, 2023

The Assembly Education Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 528 (1R) with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill requires certain school employees to complete training in suicide prevention, awareness, and response.

Under current law, public school teaching staff members receive instruction in suicide prevention as part of their professional development requirements. As amended, this bill provides that other school district employees and employees of a contracted service provider, other than mental health care professionals, who have regular and direct contact with students, as determined by the board of education, will be required to complete a one-time training program in suicide prevention, awareness, and response developed or identified by the Department of Education.

The amended bill also directs the Department of Education, in consultation with the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Human Services, the New Jersey Youth Suicide Prevention Advisory Council, suicide prevention experts, and interested stakeholders in the education community to identify training programs on suicide prevention, awareness, and response that persons subject to the bill's training requirements may access and complete free of charge.

Under the amended bill's provisions, each school district and contracted service provider is to annually provide to its employees the guidelines on the school district's reporting and suicide prevention, awareness, and response protocols, including contact information for each school's designated staff who should be notified whenever an employee believes a student may be at risk for suicide.

The amended bill specifies that a person who is required to receive training pursuant to the provisions of the bill will have a duty to warn and protect under certain circumstances and that a person who acts in good faith and takes reasonable steps to discharge a duty to warn and protect will be immune from civil and criminal liability in regard to that disclosure.

As reported by the committee, this bill is identical to Assembly Bill No. 2815, which was amended and reported by the committee on this same date.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to:

- remove a reference to the requirement that the department develop the suicide prevention training program.