

ASSEMBLY HEALTH COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 3080

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: AUGUST 24, 2020

The Assembly Health Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 3080.

As amended and reported, this bill establishes the New Jersey Suicide Prevention Advisory Council in the Department of Human Services. The council would serve as the sole advisory council in the State, which deals with issues of suicide prevention. Currently, there are two such councils, the New Jersey Youth Suicide Prevention Advisory Council in the Department of Children and Families and the New Jersey Elderly Person Suicide Prevention Advisory Council in the Department of Human Services. By establishing one council, relevant information may be shared among all council members.

The 25-member New Jersey Suicide Prevention Advisory Council established under the bill would examine existing needs and services for all those at risk of suicide, and would make recommendations to any suicide prevention entity operating under statutory authority.

The 13 ex officio members would include the Commissioners of Health, Human Services, Children and Families, Corrections, and Education, the Secretary of Higher Education, the executive director of the Juvenile Justice Commission, the Adjutant General of the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs, the Executive Director of the Board of Directors of NJ Transit, the Chief State Medical Examiner, the assistant commissioner of the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the chair of the Governor's Council on Mental Health Stigma, and the Chief Technology Officer of the Office of Information Technology, or their designees, except that if one of these members has a suitable prevention or mental health entity operating under their control, the member would be required to select a member of that entity to act as a member of the council.

The Governor would appoint four public members, three of whom would be higher education faculty members with expertise in the area of mental health; and one of whom is either a law enforcement officer in the Office of the Attorney General with expertise related to suicide, or a mental health professional.

The President of the Senate would appoint four public members, one of whom has experience as a mental health professional in the private sector with experience in youth suicide prevention and

counseling, one of whom has experience as a psychiatrist in the private sector in the provision of services to elderly persons, one of whom identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex, and one of whom is a licensed clinical alcohol and drug counselor who is also a licensed clinical social worker with experience working with individuals in crisis.

The Speaker of the General Assembly would also appoint four public members, two of whom are current or former mental health professionals with experience providing services in a secondary school, one of whom is a survivor of suicide or a family member who has been affected by suicide, and one of whom has a background as a primary health practitioner.

The bill would repeal sections 1 through 4 of P.L.2005, c.274 (C.26:2MM-1 through C.26:2MM-4), which established the New Jersey Elderly Person Suicide Prevention Advisory Council, and sections 1 through 7 of P.L.2003, c.214 (C.30:9A-22 et seq.), which gave certain relevant duties to the Departments of Children and Families and Human Services, since the bill is establishing a single council in the Department of Health, whose duties and responsibilities are covered under Title 26 of the Revised Statutes.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amendments:

(1) replace the term “completed suicide” with “death by suicide” throughout the bill and made additional revisions to that term’s definition;

(2) specifically require that the Department of Children and Families and the Department of Educations, in consultation with the Department of Health and the Department of Human Services, will offer persons who are required or encouraged to report an attempted suicide or death by suicide with current information about public and private assistance available to survivors and families of attempted and death by suicide and professionals who deal with suicide;

(3) ensure that any disclosures of information, as a result of this bill, will not violate federal or State privacy laws;

(4) increase the number of council members from 19 to 25, including adding four additional ex-officio members and two public members;

(5) add an additional appointment by the President of the Senate for a public member that identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex;

(6) revise the requirements for public members appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly and add an additional appointment for a public member that is a survivor of suicide or who has a family member who has been affected by suicide;

(7) make technical changes;

(8) change the effective date of this bill to the 180th day after the date of enactment; and

(9) move the council from the Department of Health to the Department of Human Services.