

SENATE HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES AND SENIOR CITIZENS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 606

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: SEPTEMBER 14, 2020

The Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Senate Bill No. 606.

This bill establishes the New Jersey Statewide Suicide Prevention Coordination and Oversight Council in the Department of Human Services. The purpose of the council will be to:

(1) periodically survey and evaluate existing activities, programs, initiatives, and services related to suicide prevention efforts operating throughout the State;

(2) develop standards and guidelines for suicide prevention entities operating in the State to report certain data to the council as required under the bill;

(3) assist suicide prevention entities by providing standardized guidance, based on prevailing best practices, concerning the content of informational materials made available to persons who report an attempted or completed suicide;

(4) provide guidance and assistance to suicide prevention entities concerning compliance with regulations adopted by the Commissioner of Human Services to implement the provisions of the bill;

(5) serve as a centralized hub for reporting, analyzing, and retaining certain non-identifying and de-identified data collected from suicide prevention entities operating within the State, including: the individual's age, gender, race, and ethnicity; whether the suicide was completed; the method of attempted or completed suicide; the person's status as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, undesignated/nonbinary, questioning, queer, or intersex; the person's status as a current or former law enforcement officer; the person's status as active or retired military; the municipality in which the attempted or completed suicide occurred; whether the person had previous involvement with a mental health professional or a professional specializing in the treatment of substance use disorders; and any other metric the council requires to be reported, provided that the Commissioner of Health, the Commissioner of Human Services, the Commissioner of Children and

Families, and the Attorney General have each approved collection of the additional metric by the council;

(6) collect information from suicide prevention entities operating within the State concerning the entity's programs, activities, and initiatives related to suicide prevention and intervention, including any requests for proposals issued by the entity, any grants for which the entity applies and whether those grants involve State, federal, or private monies, and any other sources of State, federal, or private funding sought out by the entity; and

(7) compile and make available to appropriate entities, including the Department of Health and other State and federal authorities authorized to acquire such data and related information, certain data collected by the council, as well as the council's findings and recommendations related to completed suicides and suicide attempts, provided that any data or other information furnished by the council to another entity does not contain any private or personal identifying information, and the data and other information is furnished in a manner that is not violative of State or federal privacy laws.

With regard to the entities that are subject to the reporting requirements under the bill, the term "suicide prevention entity" is defined to mean any entity operating under imprimatur of State authority that engages in activities related to suicide prevention or collecting data specific to attempted and completed suicides, regardless of whether the entity was established by statute, regulation, or executive or administrative action.

The council will consist of 25 members, including: 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 in the Department of Human 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, who will serve ex officio;

(2) four public members appointed by the Governor, three of whom are to be faculty members at institutions of higher education who have expertise in the area of mental health, and one of whom is to be either a law enforcement officer in the Office of the Attorney General with expertise related to suicide or a mental health professional;

(3) four public members appointed by the President of the Senate, one of whom is to have experience as a mental health professional in the private sector with experience in youth suicide prevention and counseling, one of whom is to have experience as a psychiatrist in the private sector in the provision of services to elderly persons, one of

whom is to be a person who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, undesignated/nonbinary, questioning, queer, or intersex, and one of whom is to be a licensed clinical alcohol and drug counselor who is also a licensed clinical social worker with experience working with individuals in crisis; and

(4) four public members appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly, two of whom are to be current or former mental health professionals with experience providing services in a secondary school, one of whom is to be a survivor of suicide or have a family member who has been affected by suicide, and one of whom is to have experience as a primary health care practitioner.

The public members will serve for a term of five years.

The council will be required to issue an annual report to the Governor and to the Legislature containing a summary of the data compiled by the council that includes aggregate demographic information about persons who attempt or complete suicide and any findings made by the council concerning attempted and completed suicides. The report will include recommendations for legislation or administrative or other actions as may be necessary to facilitate the accurate and efficient collection of data and promote more effective suicide prevention and intervention activities, programs, and initiatives.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2020-2021 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amendments revise the name of the council established under the bill from the “New Jersey Suicide Prevention Advisory Council” to the “New Jersey Statewide Suicide Prevention Coordination and Oversight Council.” The amendments provide that the council will be housed in the Department of Human Services, rather than the Department of Health.

The committee amendments revise the stated purposes of the council to clarify that it is to serve as a centralized hub and resource for other suicide prevention entities operating in the State. The amendments specify certain demographic and other data that is to be reported to the council, other information to be reported by suicide prevention entities, and the requirements for the council to share collected data with other entities. The amendments clarify that any data shared by the council is subject to the restrictions set forth in applicable State and federal privacy laws; as introduced, the bill only referenced the federal privacy rule concerning personal health information.

The committee amendments revise the membership of the council to add four additional ex officio members and two additional public members. The amendments further revise the qualification criteria for

certain public members appointed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the General Assembly.

The committee amendments add a requirement for the council to annually report to the Governor and the Legislature concerning the aggregate data collected by the council, as well as recommendations for legislation or other actions as may be necessary to facilitate the accurate and efficient collection of data and promote more effective suicide prevention and intervention activities, programs, and initiatives.

The committee amendments remove a section from the bill that would have repealed the law that established the Youth Suicide Prevention Advisory Council in the Department of Children and Families, as well as other provisions that would have recodified those repealed provisions under the Department of Health.

The committee amendments revise the title and synopsis of the bill to reflect the changes made by committee amendment.