

SENATE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 1070

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: OCTOBER 19, 2020

The Senate Higher Education Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 1070 with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill, known as the “College Mental Health Services Act,” establishes in the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education the “College Mental Health Services Grant Program.” The purpose of the program will be to allocate grant moneys to senior public institutions of higher education and county colleges in the State to establish or improve access to mental health services on the campuses of the institutions.

A grant received by a public institution of higher education under the program is to be specifically used for efforts to improve student access to, and the timeliness of the provision of, mental health services and supports. The grant may be used for, but is not limited to: developing initiatives to reduce wait times for students seeking mental health services and supports; hiring additional mental health professionals to provide mental health services and supports to students at the institution; contracting with independent public or private entities to provide mental health services and supports; creating methods to enhance the identification of students who may be experiencing personal, school, or family difficulties impacting the student’s mental health; and implementing efforts to increase awareness among students of existing on-campus and community resources for students experiencing mental health difficulties.

The bill also requires public institutions of higher education to post on their Internet websites the following information for each semester: the ratio of students to mental health professionals at the institution; the total number of students who had appointments with a mental health professional at the institution; the number of students who had only one appointment with a mental health professional; the number of students who had three or more appointments with a mental health professional; the total number of appointments made by students with mental health professionals; the average number of appointments for those students who had more than one appointment with a mental health professional; the average wait time for students to receive appointments with a

mental health professional; the number of students who were referred to outside mental health services; and the number of students who were referred to emergency care due to mental health concerns. The information will be updated no more than 60 days following the end of each semester and will be posted on the institution's website.

The bill also requires each public institution of higher education to annually report to the Secretary of Higher Education on the total number of students enrolled in the institution who committed suicide in the previous academic year, and the total number of students enrolled in the institution who attempted to commit suicide in the previous academic year. The secretary must report the total number of student suicides and student suicide attempts at all public institutions of higher education combined to the Governor, and to the Legislature. The secretary may also authorize limited disclosure of the collected data in medical, academic, or policy studies.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to:

1. remove the bill's requirement that a public institution of higher education publicly report on its website the total number of students who committed suicide and the total number of students who attempted to commit suicide in each semester; and
2. require that data on student suicides and student suicide attempts be reported by each public institution of higher education to the Secretary of Higher Education, who will provide the total numbers of all public institutions of higher education combined to the Governor and the Legislature. The secretary may authorize limited disclosure of this data for use in medical, academic, or policy studies.