

SENATE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 2958

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: DECEMBER 9, 2021

The Senate Higher Education Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 2958 with committee amendments.

Under the “Madison Holleran Suicide Prevention Act,” P.L.2016, c.18 (C.18A:3B-72 et seq.), 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. As amended, this bill revises that law to also 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 a 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.

This bill also requires institutions to annually conduct a mental health public awareness campaign on campus designed to: provide students with information on depression and suicide; raise awareness about the mental health services available on and off campus; and reduce the stigma associated with seeking mental health services.

The bill directs the president of an institution of higher education, or a designee, to establish a mental health crisis assessment and response plan. The plan will be 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.

As amended and reported by the committee, this bill is identical to Assembly Bill No. 2293(1R), which also was reported by the committee on this same date.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to require the president of an institution of higher education, or a designee, to establish a mental health crisis assessment and response plan. The bill, as introduced, required the governing board of the institution to fulfill this function.