



2021 South Dakota Legislature

House Concurrent Resolution 6015

Introduced by: **Representative St. John**

1 **A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION, To encourage the Executive Board of the Legislature**
2 **to create an interim legislative study on mental health education in this state.**

3 WHEREAS, suicide is the second leading cause of death for ages fifteen to thirty-four in
4 South Dakota. Mental health disorders, such as anxiety and depression, are often contributing
5 factors to suicidal ideations if left unaddressed; and

6 WHEREAS, mental health is vital to the wellbeing of all students in this state and has
7 become increasingly important in elementary and secondary schools with challenges
8 presented by the COVID-19 crisis; and

9 WHEREAS, the Legislature recognizes the tragic and complex nature of suicide, particularly
10 of a young person, and the effect it has on fellow students, families, schools, and
11 communities. The Legislature also recognizes the long-term impacts that anxiety and
12 depression can cause for students throughout their lives; and

13 WHEREAS, mental health issues can be addressed by helping students recognize and
14 respond appropriately to signs and symptoms in themselves and in peers. Mental health can
15 be improved by teaching students how to build effective coping and life skills, and by creating
16 a culture that encourages the identification of and assistance for students in need; and

17 WHEREAS, schools often serve as the first line of defense in providing mental health
18 education or counseling to students. The ability to offer education or connect students with
19 resources can vary greatly among school districts in the state, particularly in rural areas; and

20 WHEREAS, Project AWARE, a partnership between the Department of Education, the
21 Department of Social Services, certain school districts, and area community mental health
22 centers, demonstrates the importance of a collaborative and multifaceted approach to
23 addressing issues related to students' mental health;

1 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the House of Representatives of the Ninety-Sixth
2 Legislature of the State of South Dakota, the Senate concurring therein, that it is
3 recommended to the Executive Board of the Legislature to create and appoint an interim
4 legislative study to evaluate the availability of mental health education and resources for
5 students and educators in public schools in this state, and to identify the challenges related
6 to offering mental health education in public schools; and

7 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Executive Board of the Legislature is encouraged to
8 appoint mental health professionals, educators, school counselors, and other stakeholders to
9 the legislative study; and

10 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the legislative study be staffed and funded as an interim
11 legislative committee, and the members of the study are encouraged to develop and propose
12 policy recommendations to make mental health education and resources more accessible in
13 schools across the state.