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SENATE BILL 6514

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State of Washington

65th Legislature

2018 Regular Session

By Senators Brown, O'Ban, and Darneille

1 AN ACT Relating to implementing a comprehensive approach to  
2 suicide prevention and behavioral health in higher education, with  
3 enhanced services to student veterans; adding new sections to chapter  
4 43.70 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28B.77 RCW; creating a new  
5 section; and providing an expiration date.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) Washington has been a leader in  
8 addressing suicide as a public health issue. The legislature intends  
9 for Washington to continue its leadership by supporting the creation  
10 of comprehensive suicide prevention and behavioral health initiatives  
11 for postsecondary students. In 2015, the legislature created the  
12 mental health and suicide prevention in higher education task force.  
13 The task force was charged with determining the policies, resources,  
14 and technical assistance needed to support postsecondary institutions  
15 in improving access to behavioral health services and improving  
16 suicide prevention responses. In November 2016, the task force issued  
17 its report on mental health and suicide prevention in higher  
18 education.

19 (2) According to the task force report:

20 (a) The 2005 American college health assessment survey found that  
21 nine and one-half percent of students seriously considered suicide,

1 one and one-half percent of students nationwide have attempted  
2 suicide, and less than twenty percent were in treatment. According to  
3 the 2015 American college health association national college health  
4 assessment, seventy-five percent of postsecondary students reported  
5 feeling overwhelmed and thirty percent reported feeling so depressed  
6 it was difficult to function. More than one-third of students  
7 reported anxiety as negatively impacting academics and almost one-  
8 quarter said depression negatively impacted academics;

9 (b) There is incomplete data on suicide deaths among Washington's  
10 postsecondary students and the availability of behavioral health  
11 resources on Washington's campuses. There is currently no statewide  
12 system in place to track this data;

13 (c) Lack of funding for behavioral health resources across all  
14 sectors is the largest barrier to providing services for  
15 postsecondary students statewide;

16 (d) Due to funding constraints, the level of professional mental  
17 and behavioral health counseling is often limited for postsecondary  
18 institutions in all sectors. For example, six institutions in the  
19 public two-year sector servicing nearly fifty thousand students have  
20 either no professional mental health providers to counsel students or  
21 have such limited resources that the counselor to student ratio was  
22 as low as one to nearly eight thousand five hundred in 2014-2015.

23 (3) The legislature also recognizes that, as of 2016, there were  
24 over sixteen thousand student veterans and dependents enrolled in  
25 Washington's community and technical colleges, and approximately four  
26 thousand veterans and dependents enrolled in Washington's four-year  
27 institutions of higher education. The legislature recognizes that the  
28 risk for suicide is significantly higher among veterans when compared  
29 to nonveteran adults in the United States and that student veterans  
30 face unique challenges and often have vastly different life  
31 experiences from traditional students. According to a study presented  
32 a few years ago at an annual convention of the American psychological  
33 association, almost half of military veterans who are enrolled in  
34 college have contemplated suicide at some point and twenty percent  
35 have planned to kill themselves.

36 (4) The legislature intends to implement task force  
37 recommendations by:

38 (a) Creating a publicly available statewide resource for  
39 postsecondary institutions;

40 (b) Developing and centralizing data collection; and

1 (c) Creating a grant program for resource-challenged institutions  
2 to help develop suicide prevention programs in those institutions,  
3 which may include for example, enhancing treatment services to  
4 student veterans; creating campus-wide crisis services; expanding  
5 existing crisis plans to integrate suicide intervention; reentry,  
6 including medical leave that supports reentry; postvention; and  
7 creating links and referral systems between campus behavioral health  
8 resources and community-based mental health resources.

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 43.70  
10 RCW to read as follows:

11 (1) Subject to availability of amounts appropriated for this  
12 specific purpose, the department, in collaboration with the student  
13 achievement council, shall develop a statewide resource for  
14 behavioral health and suicide prevention for the state's  
15 postsecondary institutions.

16 (2) To establish the components of the statewide resource, the  
17 department shall convene and consult with a work group that consists  
18 of representatives from stakeholder groups the department deems  
19 appropriate. The department must consider representatives from the  
20 entities listed in the mental health and suicide prevention in higher  
21 education task force, created by chapter 67, Laws of 2015. At a  
22 minimum, the entities or persons in the work group must include:

- 23 (a) Representation from a tribal college;
- 24 (b) Representation from a veterans training support center;
- 25 (c) Representation from students and families;
- 26 (d) Representatives selected by the educational opportunity gap  
27 oversight and accountability committee;
- 28 (e) Representation from a community behavioral health provider;
- 29 (f) A suicide prevention expert; and
- 30 (g) Three institutional counseling center directors or executive  
31 directors to include one from each of the following: A public four-  
32 year college or university, a private, nonprofit institution, and a  
33 community and technical college.

34 (3) To develop the statewide resource, the department shall  
35 contract with an entity that has suicide prevention expertise. The  
36 department must consider recommendations made by the work group  
37 regarding choice of the contracting entity. The contracting entity  
38 must be responsible for constructing and hosting the statewide

1 resource and linking the resource to the student achievement  
2 council's and the department's web sites.

3 (4) At a minimum, the statewide resource must:

4 (a) Be made publicly available through a web-based portal or a  
5 support line;

6 (b) Provide a free curriculum to train faculty, staff, and  
7 students in suicide recognition and referral skills and in the  
8 specific needs of student veterans;

9 (c) Provide a resource to build capacity within the institutions  
10 to train individuals to deliver training in person;

11 (d) Contain model crisis protocols, per sector, that include  
12 behavioral health and suicide identification, intervention, reentry,  
13 and postvention;

14 (e) Contain model marketing materials and messages that promote  
15 student behavioral health on college campuses;

16 (f) Develop capacity for an annual conference for postsecondary  
17 institutions seeking to address students' behavioral health and  
18 suicide prevention needs. The contracting entity must be responsible  
19 for hosting the first conference for postsecondary institutions; and

20 (g) Include resources that will serve diverse communities and  
21 underrepresented populations, including resources that are culturally  
22 relevant.

23 (5) The statewide resource must be made available to  
24 postsecondary institutions by June 30, 2020.

25 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.77  
26 RCW to read as follows:

27 (1) Subject to availability of amounts appropriated for this  
28 specific purpose, the suicide prevention in higher education grant  
29 program is established. The purpose of the grant program is to  
30 provide funding to postsecondary institutions for the institutions to  
31 create partnerships with health care entities to provide mental  
32 health, behavioral health, and suicide prevention to students in  
33 their institutions.

34 (2)(a) The council shall administer the grant program in  
35 accordance with this section and in collaboration with the work group  
36 convened by the department of health under section 2 of this act. The  
37 council shall establish minimum criteria that grant recipients must  
38 meet to be awarded a grant. The grant program must be implemented by  
39 November 1, 2019.

1 (b) The council must award the first six grants created under  
2 this section to public community and technical colleges. When  
3 selecting the public community and technical colleges to be awarded  
4 the first six grants under this subsection, the council must consult  
5 with the state board for community and technical colleges. The  
6 council must identify which colleges have the greatest need along  
7 with a clear and strong demonstration of leadership willingness to  
8 utilize the statewide resources created under section 2 of this act  
9 and to develop partnerships to enhance capacity. From those  
10 identified colleges, proposals that enhance treatment services to  
11 student veterans must be given priority. Once the first six grants  
12 are awarded, the council may award grants to other postsecondary  
13 institutions that meet the council's criteria.

14 (3) For the purposes of this section, "postsecondary  
15 institutions" means institutions of higher education as defined in  
16 RCW 28B.10.016, degree-granting institutions as defined in RCW  
17 28B.85.010, private vocational schools as defined under RCW  
18 28C.10.020, and school as defined in RCW 18.16.020.

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 43.70  
20 RCW to read as follows:

21 (1) Beginning June 1, 2019, and every June 1st thereafter until  
22 2022, postsecondary institutions shall submit a report to the state  
23 department of health for the purposes of establishing a baseline for  
24 behavioral health concerns and responses at the institutions of  
25 higher education.

26 (2) The annual report must include the following information as  
27 reported to the postsecondary institution, in compliance with the  
28 department of health's established data collection requirements, and  
29 if an institution does not collect or have access to the information  
30 it must indicate this in the report:

31 (a) The awareness of students, faculty, and staff regarding  
32 behavioral health and suicide prevention resources;

33 (b) The institution's counselor-to-student ratio;

34 (c) The number of students referred to off-campus behavioral  
35 health providers;

36 (d) The number of students identifying emotional distress as  
37 reasons for withdrawal;

38 (e) The number of student suicide deaths;

1 (f) The number of student suicide attempts that result in  
2 hospitalization;

3 (g) Information about dissemination of material to students about  
4 behavioral health resources that are available on and off campus;

5 (h) Confirmation of campus plans for suicide recognition and  
6 referral training that identifies groups receiving the required  
7 training and which groups are recommended to receive training in the  
8 future;

9 (i) The entity or entities on campus responsible for the  
10 development and maintenance of the campus crisis plan that integrate  
11 policies for suicide identification, intervention, reentry, and  
12 postvention;

13 (j) The campus point person or persons responsible for the crisis  
14 plan; and

15 (k) Information about behavioral health services and supports  
16 available to veterans on campus.

17 (3) For purposes of this section, "postsecondary institutions"  
18 has the same meaning as that term is defined in section 3 of this  
19 act.

20 (4) This section expires December 31, 2022.

21 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 43.70  
22 RCW to read as follows:

23 (1) By December 31, 2018, for the purposes of collecting data on  
24 suicide prevention and behavioral health in higher education, the  
25 department shall identify data, methods for data collection, and data  
26 definitions to be used by postsecondary institutions required to  
27 submit annual reports under section 4 of this act. The department  
28 shall collaborate with the postsecondary institutions, as defined in  
29 section 3 of this act, in establishing data collection requirements  
30 and criteria.

31 (2) The department shall aggregate the information it receives by  
32 sector and, by December 1st of each year, the department must submit  
33 an aggregated summary report to the relevant committees of the  
34 legislature. The department shall serve as the depository for annual  
35 reports submitted by institutions of higher education under section 4  
36 of this act.

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