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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
56th Legislature, 1st Session, 2023

| | | | |
|------------------------|--|----------------------------|------------------|
| Bill Number | <u>HB112</u> | Sponsor | <u>Herndon</u> |
| Tracking Number | <u>.223545.1</u> | Committee Referrals | <u>HEC/HAFC</u> |
| Short Title | <u>Public School Wellness Room Pilot Project</u> | | |
| Analyst | <u>Condon</u> | Original Date | <u>1/28/2023</u> |
| | | Last Updated | <u></u> |

BILL SUMMARY

House Bill 112 (HB112) creates a six-year pilot program for elementary, middle and high schools to implement wellness rooms to support the emotional, mental and behavioral health of students.

HB112 creates the building student resiliency fund to support the pilot program. The fund would be administered by the Public Education Department (PED). During the pilot program, PED will distribute the funds to a maximum of 40 public schools.

HB112 provides requirements for the applications made to PED for the pilot program funding, and outlines evaluation criteria for PED in selecting funding recipients. Additionally, HB112 requires PED to design a data collection system.

FISCAL IMPACT

HB112 appropriates \$5 million from the general fund to the building student resiliency fund for expenditure in FY24. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY24 shall not revert to the general fund.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

House Memorial 43 (HM43). During the 2022 Regular Legislative Session, HM43 established a task force to develop a plan for mental wellness spaces in public schools. LESL and PED staff, in addition to other stakeholders, met during the 2022 interim to develop a comprehensive plan to provide mental health spaces in public schools, gather data and information from other states that have created mental wellness spaces to determine their efficacy, and develop standards for wellness spaces and their uses.

The task force found that there is a nationwide effort to establish wellness rooms and spaces for both students and staff, and that schools around the country have seen success with wellness rooms helping to teach students emotional regulation when they are supported by sound social and emotional practices. Wellness rooms can support early identification of health and mental health issues, and can support attendance and achievement. The task force reviewed different approaches

to issues such as staffing the wellness rooms and effective referral processes, and found that implementation needs to be flexible as schools face different needs and challenges.

Youth Mental Health. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), children who are mentally healthy have improved quality of life; can function well at home, in school, and in their communities; and are better able to cope with challenges. Poor mental health, however, is a growing problem for adolescents nationwide. [CDC](#) found that more than one in three high school students experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness in 2019—a 40 percent increase since 2009.

[CDC data](#) from 2019 also reflects a disparity in students who seriously consider suicide. For example, a total of 18.8 percent of students reported having seriously considered suicide, with prevalence estimates highest among females (24.1 percent); white non-Hispanic students (19.1 percent); students who reported having sex with persons of the same sex or with both sexes (54.2 percent); and students who identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (46.8 percent). For all student subgroups, rates have been continuously increasing for students feeling sad or hopeless, seriously considering attempting suicide, making a suicide plan, and attempting suicide.

| THE PERCENTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO: | 2009 Total | 2011 Total | 2013 Total | 2015 Total | 2017 Total | 2019 Total |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness | 26.1 | 28.5 | 29.9 | 29.9 | 31.5 | 36.7 |
| Seriously considered attempting suicide | 13.8 | 15.8 | 17.0 | 17.7 | 17.2 | 18.8 |
| Made a suicide plan | 10.9 | 12.8 | 13.6 | 14.6 | 13.6 | 15.7 |
| Attempted suicide | 6.3 | 7.8 | 8.0 | 8.6 | 7.4 | 8.9 |
| Were injured in a suicide attempt that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse | 1.9 | 2.4 | 2.7 | 2.8 | 2.4 | 2.5 |

School-Based Health Centers. New Mexico has around 80 school-based health centers that provide medical and behavioral health services. Some operate beyond regular school hours, including on weekends, during school vacations, and during school closures, while others offer limited hours of operations. These centers are staffed by medical professionals and have partnerships with the schools in which they are based.

Wellness Rooms in NM Schools. Several schools and districts have already implemented wellness rooms and have reported positive outcomes. Las Cruces Public Schools has wellness spaces in approximately 21 percent of their K-12 schools, and another 28 percent of schools have reported they are working on adopting wellness spaces in their buildings. Eldorado High School in Albuquerque has a dedicated space for their wellness room divided into four separate spaces to address student need. Taos High School has created wellness spaces throughout the school to provide students a space to relax, recharge and regulate.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

Consideration will need to be given to the capacity for PED to administer funding and oversee the pilot program, and establish and manage the data collection required in HB112. At the time of this analysis, a PED agency analysis was not available.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files

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