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

Bill Number	<u>HB112/aHAFC</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>3/2/2023</u>

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of HAFC Amendment

The HAFC amendment removes the appropriation from House Bill 112 (HB112/aHAFC).

Synopsis of HEC Amendment

The House Education Committee (HEC) amendment to House Bill 112 (HB112/aHEC) provides language cleanup and clarity to specify schools that should be prioritized for funding during the pilot program, the responsibilities of the Public Education Department (PED), and dates by which PED must report to the Legislature.

Synopsis of Original Bill

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).

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/aHAFC does not contain an appropriation.

The HAFC Substitute for House Bill 2 includes \$200 thousand to PED to pilot wellness rooms in public and charter schools.

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. LESC 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

In their agency analysis, PED says they would need 2 FTEs for an annual cost of \$220,000 to administer the pilot program. HB112/aHAFC would require PED to determine application requirements and procedures, criteria for evaluating applications, administer the pilot project funding, and report to the Legislature beginning November 30, 2024.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files
- Public Education Department (PED)

BEC/cf/msb