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## FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

**LAST UPDATED** \_\_\_\_\_

**SPONSOR** Stewart **ORIGINAL DATE** 2/7/25

**BILL**

**SHORT TITLE** Youth Behavioral Health Prevention Project **NUMBER** Senate Bill 238

**ANALYST** Liu

**APPROPRIATION\***  
(dollars in thousands)

FY25	FY26	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
	\$1,450.0	Recurring	General Fund

Parenteses ( ) indicate expenditure decreases.  
\*Amounts reflect most recent analysis of this legislation.

Relates to House Bill 58, Senate Bill 11, and Senate Bill 160

### Sources of Information

LFC Files  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Agency Analysis Received From  
New Mexico Public Schools Insurance Authority (NMPSIA)  
Department of Information Technology (DoIT)  
Health Care Authority (HCA)  
Department of Health (DOH)  
Regional Education Cooperatives (REC)

Agency Analysis was Solicited but Not Received From  
Public Education Department (PED)

## SUMMARY

### Synopsis of Senate Bill 238

Senate Bill 238 appropriates \$1.45 million from the general fund to PED for the purpose of a youth behavioral health prevention project offered through a digital platform. Provisions of this bill require PED’s request for proposals (RFP) to require:

1. A platform providing online behavioral health education resources, pre-moderated peer-to-peer support services, and online private sessions with state-licensed behavioral health professionals, and
2. The provider to possess demonstrated experience providing services to public school students in other states.

This bill does not contain an effective date and, as a result, would go into effect 90 days after the Legislature adjourns if enacted, or June 20, 2025.

## FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$1.45 million contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY26 shall revert to the general fund. Although the bill does not specify future appropriations, establishing a new grant program could create an expectation the program will continue in future fiscal years; therefore, this cost is assumed to be recurring.

The prescriptive nature of directing the RFP requirements may limit the number of providers that would qualify for the funds. A 2021 LFC evaluation on procurement found the number of state agency sole source and emergency procurements has grown rapidly in recent years, often leading to the state overspending for purchases from everyday acquisitions of laptops and cars to noncompetitively sourced contracts worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

## SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

New Mexico's crisis and access line (NMCAL), a provider of crisis support through calls, text messages, chats, and digital tools, appears to provide services aligned with the RFP requirements in this bill. NMCAL provides a hotline for New Mexicans to speak with a behavioral health professional as well as a line for peer support specialists to answer calls and text messages for referrals to community services. NMCAL also has a NMConnect app, a digital self-help program, and other online behavioral health education resources on its website, including links to the National 988 lifeline—a network of over 200 local crisis centers that combine local care and resources with national standards and best practices. In 2024, NMCAL reported the following utilization data for the month of December:

- New Mexico Crisis and Access Line: 2,786 calls.
- 988 New Mexico Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: 3,346 calls and 872 web chats/texts.
- Core Service Agency Programs: 310 participants.
- Rio Grande Gorge Bridge Intercoms: 88.
- Peer to Peer Warmline: 4,979 calls and 181 web chats/texts.

On average, NMCAL received about 12 thousand engagements through all lines each month of 2024, with the most engagements during the summer months (reaching over 14.3 thousand engagements in June). Most engagements in December 2024 were for clinical calls (2,847), and the top reasons for clinical calls were related to suicide (925) followed by substance use (391) and situational stress (263). Most callers were stabilized by the counselor (2,441), with 20 callers going to the hospital, 65 callers consenting to interactions with emergency responders, and 23 callers interacting with emergency responders without consent. Approximately 19 percent of engagements on NMCAL were individuals under the age of 24.

The appropriation in this bill may expand services to support behavioral health needs for students. A 2021 Columbia University study on the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's crisis response system found about one-thirds of users reported improvements in their emotional state after using the crisis line from a pre- and post-survey. About 45 percent of suicidal users reported feeling less suicidal after using the crisis line. However, researchers noted there were a

substantial number of users who reported worsening of outcomes after the calls. Males and older individuals were also less likely to provide positive feedback about their counselors and report positive outcomes. The report noted the lifeline’s system was not specifically targeted to youth and cited the appeal of online crisis services to these age groups in other studies. Given the higher reported outcomes for younger populations, researchers recommended expanding online services to complement telephone hotlines.

New data from the 2023 New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey shows some adolescent mental health metrics have improved after eight years of worsening outcomes. Changes between the 2021 and 2023 survey results for high school students included:

- Decrease in reported persistent sadness or hopelessness from 44.2 percent to 36.7 percent;
- Decrease in attempted suicide from 10 percent to 8.4 percent;
- Decrease in electronic vapor product use from 25.3 percent to 18.8 percent;
- Decrease in prescription opioids misuse from 7.9 percent to 7 percent; and
- Decrease in cannabis use from 20.3 percent to 17.9 percent.

Students who experienced physical dating violence, homelessness, and racism in school were more likely to report cannabis use. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning, transgender, and non-binary students were at least three times more likely to have attempted suicide. Female students were more likely to report mental health concerns than male students, but students reporting strong supportive relationships with their peers were less likely to experience mental health concerns.

CDC’s youth risk behavior surveillance system reports 77 percent of students use social media frequently, which has been associated with suicide risk, bullying, negative body image, poor sleep, and feelings of sadness and hopelessness. The 2024 U.S. Surgeon General advisory on social media and mental health recommends policymakers take steps to strengthen safety standards and limit access in ways that make social media safer for children of all ages.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS**

Provisions of this bill require the Public Education Department to issue an RFP with specific requirements for a provider of online behavioral health services. If a sole source procurement is necessary, the department will need to further demonstrate the need for sole sourcing these services in addition to processing the award.

## **CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP**

This bill relates to House Bill 58, which appropriates funding to an organization to train school staff, students, and community members in culturally appropriate suicide prevention and trauma-informed care and mental health rooms. The bill also relates to Senate Bill 11 and Senate Bill 160, which focus on cell phone and digital device use policies in schools.