

LESC bill analyses are available on the New Mexico Legislature website ([www.nmlegis.gov](http://www.nmlegis.gov)). Bill analyses are prepared by LESC staff for standing education committees of the New Mexico Legislature. LESC does not assume any responsibility for the accuracy of these reports if they are used for other purposes.

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE**  
**BILL ANALYSIS**  
**55th Legislature, 2nd Session, 2022**

<b>Bill Number</b>	<u>HM43</u>	<b>Sponsor</b>	<u>Herndon/Trujillo</u>
<b>Tracking Number</b>	<u>.221814.1</u>	<b>Committee Referrals</b>	<u>HEC</u>
<b>Short Title</b>	<u>School Mental Wellness Spaces</u>		
<b>Analyst</b>	<u>Williams</u>	<b>Original Date</b>	<u>2/10/2022</u>
		<b>Last Updated</b>	<u></u>

---

## **BILL SUMMARY**

### Synopsis of Bill

House Memorial 43 (HM43) requests LESC, in collaboration with the Public Education Department (PED), to organize a task force to develop a plan for mental wellness spaces in schools. HM43 requests the committee to report its findings and recommendations to the Legislature and governor by November 2, 2022.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

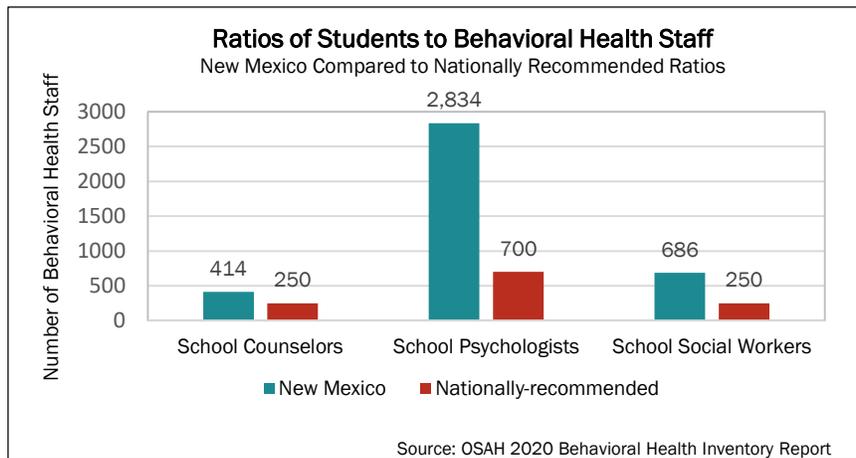
Legislative memorials do not carry appropriations.

## **SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES**

**Youth Mental Health.** According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](http://www.cdc.gov), 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](http://www.cdc.gov) 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. In the same report, approximately one in six youths reported making a suicide plan in the past year—a 44 percent increase since 2009.

**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 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, 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.

**Behavioral Health Staff in New Mexico Schools.** According to the Department of Health's Office of Student and Adolescent Health's *2020 Behavioral Health Inventory Report*, the student-to-staff ratios in behavioral health services are well above nationally recommended ratios.



***Mental Wellness Spaces.*** HM43 requests the task force develop a comprehensive plan to provide mental health spaces in public middle and high 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. After conducting such research, the task force is requested to determine if a pilot project creating mental wellness spaces in public schools is warranted. The memorial does not define “mental wellness space”: however, it suggests that mental wellness spaces could be spaces that students go during the school day to directly access mental health counselors or spaces where students are comfortable and can discuss concerns.

Some schools around the country have created spaces for students to relax, calm down, and de-stress to support student mental and behavioral health. For example, several middle and high schools in Orange County, California, are piloting school-based “WellSpace” centers—thoughtfully designed, supervised environments that are safe, calming, and inclusive for students. The central idea is to provide students a calming place to go for stretches of 10 to 15 minutes based on a teacher’s referral or by request. The Orange County Department of Education worked with a pediatric healthcare system in its county to create these spaces in schools as part of an effort to improve the mental health of children and teenagers.

## **SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

- LESC Files

**EW/hg/mb**