

LFC Requestor: LIU, Sunny

2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION
AGENCY BILL ANALYSIS

Section I: General

Chamber: Senate

Category: Bill

Number: 238

Type: Introduced

Date (of THIS analysis): February 3, 2025

Sponsor(s): Mimi Stewart

Short Title: Youth Behavioral Health Prevention Project

Reviewing Agency: Agency 665 - Department of Health

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Section II: Fiscal Impact

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation Contained		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY 25	FY 26		
\$0	\$1,450	Nonrecurring	General

REVENUE (dollars in thousands)

Estimated Revenue			Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY 25	FY 26	FY 27		
\$0	\$0	\$0	NA	NA

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY 25	FY 26	FY 27	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Non-recurring	Fund Affected
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	NA	NA

Section III: Relationship to other legislation

Duplicates: None

Conflicts with: None

Companion to: None

Relates to: House Bill 58 (HB58)

Duplicates/Relates to an Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act: None

Section IV: Narrative

1. BILL SUMMARY

a) Synopsis

SB 238 would appropriate \$1,450,000 from the general fund to the NM Public Education Department (PED) for FY26 for a “youth behavioral health prevention project” offered through a multi-component digital platform. The Public Education Department’s request for proposals will require that:

1. The proposed platform provides online behavioral health education resources, pre-moderated peer-to-peer support services, and online private sessions with state licensed behavioral health professionals.
2. The provider of the platform must possess demonstrated experience providing services described in the request for proposals to public school students in other states.

Is this an amendment or substitution? Yes No

Is there an emergency clause? Yes No

b) Significant Issues

Online behavioral health intervention tools are digital platforms that offer easy access to behavioral health support. These tools are typically accessible via smartphones, tablets, computers, or other digital devices. They help reduce wait times for speaking with a behavioral health provider, offer instant peer support and self-help resources, and improve access to care for adolescents, especially those in rural areas.

SB 238 would create a prevention opportunity for youth behavioral health. The U.S. Preventative Task Force recommends universal screening for anxiety and depression among school-age youth ([Source: US Preventative Task Force Recommendation on Anxiety, US Preventative Task Force Recommendation on Depression](#)). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also recommend that, “public health uses a primary prevention approach to promote positive mental health by focusing on the drivers of well-being and mental distress. We work with partners at the federal, state, and community level to improve mental health. These partners can include health care providers, public health workers, community organizations, faith-based communities, educators, local government leaders, and others” ([Source: CDC – Protecting the Nation’s Mental Health](#)). A related CDC publication found that the traditional approach to mental behavioral health care in the United States “is primarily a one-on-one

approach that focuses on individuals who have a clinical diagnosis. This approach drastically limits the number of people for whom the appropriate level of care is available, let alone addressing the needs of those whose level of psychological distress does not reach the diagnostic threshold. As a result, many people with high levels of stress and uncertainty are left without the appropriate psychological support and miss the opportunity for prevention and early intervention” ([Source: The Critical Need for a Population Health Approach: Addressing the Nation’s Behavioral Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond](#)).

Significant barriers interfere with access and delivery of mental health services for adolescents, including barriers related to cost, geographic proximity, and time, among others. Some teens struggle in homes where parent(s) may have difficulty leaving work to take them to appointments or generally lack these resources in their communities. These barriers often result in long waitlists and travel times, as well as a shortage of professionals providing evidence-based care. Access to treatment is especially challenging for youth in rural regions and for adolescents who are racial, ethnic, sexual, and/or gender minorities ([Geographic Variation in the Supply of Selected Behavioral Health Providers - ScienceDirect](#)). Teens also often lack awareness and understanding of their symptoms as clinically significant, are uneducated about their treatment options, or are hesitant to share their symptoms with parents or other adults ([Perceived barriers and facilitators to mental health help-seeking in young people: a systematic review | BMC Psychiatry | Full Text](#)). Even when youth do access mental health care, treatment completion and compliance are often low due to these persistent barriers (e.g., cost, time, transportation, stigma).

2. PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

- Does this bill impact the current delivery of NMDOH services or operations?

Yes No

If yes, describe how.

- Is this proposal related to the NMDOH Strategic Plan? Yes No

Goal 1: We expand equitable access to services for all New Mexicans

Goal 2: We ensure safety in New Mexico healthcare environments

Goal 3: We improve health status for all New Mexicans

Goal 4: We support each other by promoting an environment of mutual respect, trust, open communication, and needed resources for staff to serve New Mexicans and to grow and reach their professional goals

3. FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

- If there is an appropriation, is it included in the Executive Budget Request?

Yes No N/A

- If there is an appropriation, is it included in the LFC Budget Request?

Yes No N/A

- Does this bill have a fiscal impact on NMDOH? Yes No

4. ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

Will this bill have an administrative impact on NMDOH? Yes No

5. DUPLICATION, CONFLICT, COMPANIONSHIP OR RELATIONSHIP

SB 238 is related to HB58 which would appropriate three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) to the Public Education Department (NMPED) to partner with an organization that provides trauma-informed and culture-centered suicide prevention training to school staff, students and community members; and one million seven hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$1,750,000) to support the operation of fourteen mental health rooms in schools across the state.

6. TECHNICAL ISSUES

Are there technical issues with the bill? Yes No

7. LEGAL/REGULATORY ISSUES (OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES)

- Will administrative rules need to be updated or new rules written? Yes No
- Have there been changes in federal/state/local laws and regulations that make this legislation necessary (or unnecessary)? Yes No
- Does this bill conflict with federal grant requirements or associated regulations?
 Yes No
- Are there any legal problems or conflicts with existing laws, regulations, policies, or programs? Yes No

8. DISPARITIES ISSUES

Behavioral health issues are common and impact all student populations. Significant disparities do exist, including:

- In 2023, New Mexico high school girls were significantly more likely to experience frequent mental distress, have anxiety, depression symptoms, or report a past year suicide attempt than high school boys (Source: 2023 Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey, data analyzed by NMDOH-Center for Health Protection).
- New Mexico high school students who were lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or gender non-binary are at significantly higher risks of substance use than their peers, including misusing prescription pain medication and using cocaine, methamphetamine and inhalants (Source: 2023 Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey, data analyzed by NMDOH)
- In 2023, New Mexico high school students who were lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or gender non-binary were significantly more likely to experience frequent mental distress, have anxiety, depression symptoms, or report a past year suicide attempt than their peers (Source: 2023 Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey, data analyzed by NMDOH).
- In 2023, New Mexico high school students who were transgender or gender non-binary were 2.8 times as likely to report a past year suicide attempt as their peers (Source: 2023 Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey, data analyzed by NMDOH).

- In 2023, New Mexico high school students who were lesbian, gay, bisexual, or gender non-binary were 3.3 times as likely to report a past year suicide attempt as their peers (Source: 2023 Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey, data analyzed by NMDOH).

9. HEALTH IMPACT(S)

Mental health concerns are common in New Mexico and often untreated. In 2023, among New Mexico high school students, 28% had anxiety symptoms and 25% had depression symptoms. Students with either anxiety or depression symptoms were about five times as likely to have attempted suicide as those students without these symptoms (Source: 2023 Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey, data analyzed by NMDOH-Center for Health Protection for this Analysis). In 2023, suicide was the third leading cause of death among youth ages 5 to 17 (Source: [CDC Wonder – Underlying Cause of Death Query](#)).

SB238, if enacted, would appropriate \$1,450,000 from the general fund to the public education department to create a youth behavioral health prevention project offered through a multi-component digital platform, providing access to prevention and education resources, peer support sessions, and services provided by state-licensed professionals. The prevention project could expand access to behavioral health services and resources for New Mexico youths. The digital platform will help reduce the barriers otherwise hindering students from seeking and receiving behavioral health support, such as the lack of reliable transportation.

Providing a youth behavioral health prevention project through the public education system could be beneficial for youth who lack the resources or support outside of school. Strong and supportive relationships with peers and adults in the school are important protective factors for New Mexican youths and reduce risks on mental health and substance use issues. These protective factors are particularly critical when the student lacks satisfying and supportive relationships with adults at home (Source: 2023 Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey, data analyzed by NMDOH).

10. ALTERNATIVES

None

11. WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL?

If SB238 is not enacted, an appropriation of \$1,450,000.00 from the general fund to the Public Education Department for expenditure in fiscal year 2026 would not be made for a youth behavioral health prevention project offered through a multi-component digital platform.

12. AMENDMENTS

None