AB-2246 Pupil suicide prevention policies. (2015-2016)

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Assembly Bill No. 2246

CHAPTER 642

An act to add Article 2.5 (commencing with Section 215) to Chapter 2 of Part 1 of Division 1 of Title 1 of the Education Code, relating to pupil health.

[Approved by Governor September 26, 2016. Filed with Secretary of State September 26, 2016.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2246, O'Donnell. Pupil suicide prevention policies.

Existing law establishes a system of public elementary and secondary schools in this state and provides for the establishment of school districts and other local educational agencies to operate these schools and provide instruction to pupils. Existing law establishes the State Department of Education in state government and vests the department with specified powers and duties relating to the state's public school system.

This bill would require the governing board or body of a local educational agency, as defined, that serves pupils in grades 7 to 12, inclusive, to, before the beginning of the 2017–18 school year, adopt a policy on pupil suicide prevention, as specified, that specifically addresses the needs of high-risk groups. By imposing additional duties on local educational agencies, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program. The bill would require the department to develop and maintain a model policy to serve as a guide for local educational agencies.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to these statutory provisions.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: yes

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) According to the latest 2013 data from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth and young adults 10 to 24 years of age, inclusive.

(b) As children and teens spend a significant amount of their young lives in school, the personnel who interact with them on a daily basis are in a prime position to recognize the warning signs of suicide and make the

appropriate referrals for help.

(c) In a national survey conducted by the Jason Foundation, the number one person whom a pupil would turn to for helping a friend who might be suicidal was a teacher. It is imperative that when a young person comes to a teacher for help, the teacher has the knowledge, tools, and resources to respond.

(d) There are national hotlines available to help adults and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ) youth experiencing suicidal ideation, including the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and the Trevor Project, respectively.

(e) According to the Family Acceptance Project, research has found that, for an LGBTQ youth, having at least one supportive adult can reduce the youth's risk of suicide.

(f) A model policy on suicide prevention created in consultation with suicide prevention experts and other stakeholders is available through the Trevor Project for adoption or adaptation, or both, by the State Department of Education and local educational agencies.

SEC. 2. Article 2.5 (commencing with Section 215) is added to Chapter 2 of Part 1 of Division 1 of Title 1 of the Education Code, to read:

Article 2.5. Pupil Suicide Prevention Policies

215. (a) (1) The governing board or body of a local educational agency that serves pupils in grades 7 to 12, inclusive, shall, before the beginning of the 2017–18 school year, adopt, at a regularly scheduled meeting, a policy on pupil suicide prevention in grades 7 to 12, inclusive. The policy shall be developed in consultation with school and community stakeholders, school-employed mental health professionals, and suicide prevention experts and shall, at a minimum, address procedures relating to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.

(2) The policy shall specifically address the needs of high-risk groups, including, but not limited to, all of the following:

(A) Youth bereaved by suicide.

(B) Youth with disabilities, mental illness, or substance use disorders.

(C) Youth experiencing homelessness or in out-of-home settings, such as foster care.

(D) Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth.

(3) (A) The policy shall also address any training to be provided to teachers of pupils in grades 7 to 12, inclusive, on suicide awareness and prevention.

(B) Materials approved by a local educational agency for training shall include how to identify appropriate mental health services, both at the schoolsite and within the larger community, and when and how to refer youth and their families to those services.

(C) Materials approved for training may also include programs that can be completed through self-review of suitable suicide prevention materials.

(4) The policy shall be written to ensure that a school employee acts only within the authorization and scope of the employee's credential or license. Nothing in this section shall be construed as authorizing or encouraging a school employee to diagnose or treat mental illness unless the employee is specifically licensed and employed to do so.

(5) To assist local educational agencies in developing policies for pupil suicide prevention, the department shall develop and maintain a model policy in accordance with this section to serve as a guide for local educational agencies.

(b) For purposes of this section, "local educational agency" means a county office of education, school district, state special school, or charter school.

SEC. 3. If the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code.