

SCS SB 52 -- SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

SPONSOR: Nasheed

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass by Consent" by the Standing Committee on Health and Mental Health Policy by a vote of 10 to 0. Voted "Do Pass Consent" by the Committee on Consent and House Procedure by a vote of 10 to 0.

This bill requires each public institution of higher education to develop and implement a policy to advise students and staff on suicide prevention programs available on and off campus that includes, but is not limited to crisis intervention access, mental health program access, multimedia application access, student communication plans, and post intervention plans. Such policy shall also advise students, faculty, and staff of the proper procedures for identifying and addressing the needs of students exhibiting suicidal tendencies or behavior, and shall require training where appropriate.

Each public institution of higher education shall provide all incoming students with information about depression and suicide prevention resources available to students. The information contained in such policy, in addition to any applicable free-of-cost prevention materials or programs, shall be posted on the websites of each public institution of higher education.

Each public institution shall establish and maintain methods of anonymous reporting of unsafe, potentially harmful, dangerous, violent, or criminal activities, or the threat of such activities. Such methods shall ensure the anonymity of the reporting party.

This bill creates the "Show-Me Compassionate Medical Education Act" and designates August 28, 2017, and thereafter a date designated by specified committees, as "Show-Me Compassionate Medical Education Day." Citizens are encouraged to participate in activities and events to increase awareness regarding medical student wellbeing.

A medical school may not restrict any specified organization from conducting a study of the prevalence of mental health issues among medical students or punishing a specified organization or student for any involvement with such a study.

The bill creates the "Show-Me Compassionate Medical Education Research Project Committee," specifies the tasks of the committee, and permits medical schools in the state to collaborate with the committee to conduct a study of how to reduce medical student depression and suicide. The requirements of any study conducted under the provisions of the bill are specified and the committee is

required to produce an annual report that must be made available on each medical school's website and provided to the General Assembly.

The bill contains an emergency clause.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that medical students have a large amount of material to master in a short amount of time. The rate of depression among medical students is much higher than that of others their age and can be as much as six times higher. Suicide has become the second highest cause of death of students behind accidents. There is a severe lack of knowledge about depression which prohibits individuals from recognizing the symptoms in themselves and their friends and classmates.

Testifying for the bill were Senator Nasheed; Missouri State Medical Association; Missouri Academy of Family Physicians; Missouri Coalition of Community Mental Health Centers; and the Missouri National Education Association.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.