

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 2246

**Introduced by Assembly Member O'Donnell
(Coauthor: Assembly Member Low)**

February 18, 2016

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.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2246, as introduced, 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 a 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. State-mandated local program: yes.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

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

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

6 (b) As children and teens spend a significant amount of their
7 young lives in school, the personnel that interact with them on a
8 daily basis are in a prime position to recognize the warning signs
9 of suicide and make the appropriate referrals for help.

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

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

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

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

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

1 Article 2.5. Pupil Suicide Prevention Policies

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

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

13 (A) Youth bereaved by suicide.

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

16 (C) Youth experiencing homelessness or in out-of-home settings.

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

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

21 (A) Materials approved by a local educational agency for
22 training shall include how to identify appropriate mental health
23 services, both within the schoolsite and also within the larger
24 community, and when and how to refer youth and their families
25 to those services.

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

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

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

36 SEC. 3. If the Commission on State Mandates determines that
37 this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to
38 local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made

- 1 pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division
- 2 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code.

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