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BILL ANALYSIS

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House Bill 4375 (as passed by the House)
Sponsor: Representative Chris Ward
House Committee: Education
Senate Committee: Education

Date Completed: 6-26-06

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Revised School Code to encourage school districts and public school academies (PSAs) to provide instruction to students and personnel on suicide and depression, and require the Department of Education to develop or select model programs and materials on suicide prevention and awareness.

Specifically, the bill would encourage a school board or the board of directors of a PSA to provide age-appropriate instruction for pupils and professional development for school personnel concerning the warning signs and risk factors for suicide and depression, and the protective factors that help prevent suicide.

The instruction and professional development would have to be designed to achieve the following goals:

- To prevent both fatal and nonfatal suicide behaviors among youth.
- To increase pupil awareness of the warning signs and risk factors for suicide and depression.
- To improve access to appropriate prevention services for vulnerable youth groups.

If a school district or PSA provided such instruction, it would have to give notice of the instruction to the parents of all pupils of each school in which the instruction was provided, using the method normally used for regular communication with parents. Failure to comply with this requirement would not create a cause of action or constitute a breach of any legal duty in a civil action.

The bill also would encourage a school board or PSA board of directors to work with school personnel and local or State organizations and resources specializing in suicide prevention and awareness.

The Department of Education would have to develop or select model programs and materials on suicide prevention and awareness that were appropriate for the purposes specified above, such as the Michigan Model for Comprehensive School Health Education, and make those programs and materials available to school districts and PSAs.

(The Michigan Model was first developed in 1985 by several State agencies to provide a health education framework for grades K-12. The curriculum is distributed by Central Michigan University's educational materials center and provides age-specific lessons and other support materials for teachers.)

Proposed MCL 380.1171

Legislative Analyst: Curtis Walker

FISCAL IMPACT

To the extent the Department of Education does not already have applicable materials available, the Department likely would incur costs associated with developing or selecting model programs and materials on suicide prevention and awareness, and making those programs and materials available to school districts and public school academies.

To the extent school districts and public school academies newly chose to provide age-appropriate instruction about warning signs and risk factors for suicide and depression, the districts and academies could see increased costs associated with such instruction.

Fiscal Analyst: Kathryn Summers-Coty

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.