STATE OF NEW YORK

1008

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

(Prefiled)

January 8, 2025

Introduced by Sens. BROUK, PALUMBO -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Higher Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to improving student mental health and mental health literacy in institutions of higher education in the state, and requiring the amendment or adoption of related protocols and policies of SUNY, CUNY and independent institutions of higher education

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. The education law is amended by adding a new section 362 to read as follows:

§ 362. Student mental health. 1. The state university shall take the following actions regarding student mental health needs:

(a) (i) review, amend and publish various protocols and policies intended to improve the mental health of students, to improve mental health literacy among students and staff, and to establish parity between physical and mental health, including reasonable accommodations, whenever possible and appropriate;

(ii) review, amend and publish enrollment, re-enrollment, medical leave of absence, voluntary and involuntary leave and termination policies of the state university and create specific provisions for students experiencing mental health issues or crises, that are intended to improve responses to the mental health needs and crises of students, improve suicide prevention and intervention, provide flexible voluntary leave opportunities, provide individualized student assessments with consideration of reasonable requests by students and appropriate deference to their treating providers, and provide reasonable accommodations to avoid extended involuntary leave or termination, whenever possible and appropriate;

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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(b) include a mental health section in orientation programs for newly enrolled students intended to enhance mental health literacy among students, to increase knowledge about mental health and help-seeking behaviors, and to reduce stigma;

(c) all full-time faculty, administrators, athletic coaches, student-facing and support staff, including adjunct professors of the university, shall be required to receive mental health training on mental health literacy, relevant disability law, reduction of stigma training, best practices regarding reasonable accommodations for students with mental health needs, and recognizing signs of mental distress among students and recommended follow-up safety actions. All such training shall be provided in a culturally competent manner. Staff shall receive initial training within one year of the effective date of this section, or within one year after the date upon which they commence employment at the university, with refresher training required within each three-year period thereafter. The chancellor of the state university, in conjunction with the commissioner, shall prescribe the form and manner in which such training shall be provided; and

(d) institute other programs intended to address and improve student mental health.

2. The state university and the department shall research, review, and publish model protocols and policies, that may be adopted and implemented by colleges and universities under their jurisdiction, to implement the provisions of subdivision one of this section.

§ 2. The education law is amended by adding a new section 6235 to read as follows:

§ 6235. Student mental health. 1. The city university shall take the following actions regarding student mental health:

(a) (i) review, amend and publish various protocols and policies intended to improve the mental health of students, to improve mental health literacy among students and staff, and to establish parity between physical and mental health, including reasonable accommodations, whenever possible and appropriate;

(ii) review, amend and publish enrollment, re-enrollment, medical leave of absence, voluntary and involuntary leave and termination policies of the city university and create specific provisions for students experiencing mental health issues or crises, that are intended to improve responses to the mental health needs and crises of students, improve suicide prevention and intervention, provide flexible voluntary leave opportunities, provide individualized student assessments with consideration of reasonable requests by students and appropriate deference to their treating providers, and provide reasonable accommodations to avoid extended involuntary leave or termination, whenever possible and appropriate;

(b) include a mental health section in orientation programs for newly enrolled students intended to enhance mental health literacy among students, to increase knowledge about mental health and help-seeking behaviors, and to reduce stigma;

(c) all full-time faculty, administrators, athletic coaches, student-facing and support staff, including adjunct professors of the city university, shall be required to receive mental health training on mental health literacy, relevant disability law, reduction of stigma training, best practices regarding reasonable accommodations for students with mental health needs, and recognizing signs of mental distress among students and recommended follow-up safety actions. All such training shall be provided in a culturally competent manner. Staff

shall receive initial training within one year of the effective date of this section, or within one year after the date upon which they commence employment at the city university, with refresher training required within each three-year period thereafter. The chancellor of the city university, in conjunction with the commissioner, shall prescribe the form and manner in which such training shall be provided; and

(d) institute other programs intended to address and improve student mental health.

2. The city university and the department shall research, review, and publish model protocols and policies, that may be adopted and implemented by colleges and universities under their jurisdiction, to implement the provisions of subdivision one of this section.

§ 3. The education law is amended by adding a new section 237-a to read as follows:

§ 237-a. Student mental health, mental health literacy and training in master plans of independent institutions of higher education. 1. The regents plan for higher education, required to be developed and transmitted pursuant to section two hundred thirty-seven of this part, and approved master plans of independent institutions of higher education shall include protocols and policies intended to improve the mental health of students, improve mental health literacy among students, faculty and support staff, and establish parity between physical and mental health, including reasonable accommodations, whenever possible and appropriate. The regents plan shall also require such institutions to review, amend and publish enrollment, re-enrollment, medical leave of absence, voluntary and involuntary leave, and termination policies for students experiencing mental health issues or crises; improve responses to mental health needs and crises; review and improve suicide prevention and intervention policies; and provide appropriate staff training to all full-time faculty, administrators, athletic coaches, student-facing and support staff, as well as adjunct professors, to implement the above-referenced protocols and policies.

2. Independent institutions of higher education, shall review model protocols and policies that may be developed or adopted by the university, the city university, or the department and consider whether to adopt such protocols and policies, in whole or in part, for inclusion in their master plans, for purposes of improving student mental health, mental health literacy, and responses to mental health needs and crises in such institutions.

§ 4. This act shall take effect immediately; provided, however, that the provisions relating to the regents plan and university master plans pursuant to section three of this act, shall be effective on the first date, following the effective date of this act, when such plans are required to be completed under section 237 of the education law.