

STATE OF NEW YORK

10755

IN ASSEMBLY

March 27, 2026

Introduced by M. of A. KELLES -- read once and referred 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:

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

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

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

10 (ii) review, amend and publish enrollment, re-enrollment, medical
11 leave of absence, voluntary and involuntary leave and termination poli-
12 cies of the state university and create specific provisions for students
13 experiencing mental health issues or crises, that are intended to
14 improve responses to the mental health needs and crises of students,
15 improve suicide prevention and intervention, provide flexible voluntary
16 leave opportunities, provide individualized student assessments with
17 consideration of reasonable requests by students and appropriate defer-
18 ence to their treating providers, and provide reasonable accommodations
19 to avoid extended involuntary leave or termination, whenever possible
20 and appropriate;

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

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

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

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

17 2. The state university and the department shall research, review, and
18 publish model protocols and policies, that may be adopted and imple-
19 mented by colleges and universities under their jurisdiction, to imple-
20 ment the provisions of subdivision one of this section.

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

23 § 6235. Student mental health. 1. The city university shall take the
24 following actions regarding student mental health:

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

30 (ii) review, amend and publish enrollment, re-enrollment, medical
31 leave of absence, voluntary and involuntary leave and termination poli-
32 cies of the city university and create specific provisions for students
33 experiencing mental health issues or crises, that are intended to
34 improve responses to the mental health needs and crises of students,
35 improve suicide prevention and intervention, provide flexible voluntary
36 leave opportunities, provide individualized student assessments with
37 consideration of reasonable requests by students and appropriate defer-
38 ence to their treating providers, and provide reasonable accommodations
39 to avoid extended involuntary leave or termination, whenever possible
40 and appropriate;

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

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

1 university, in conjunction with the commissioner, shall prescribe the
2 form and manner in which such training shall be provided; and
3 (d) institute other programs intended to address and improve student
4 mental health.

5 2. The city university and the department shall research, review, and
6 publish model protocols and policies, that may be adopted and imple-
7 mented by colleges and universities under their jurisdiction, to imple-
8 ment the provisions of subdivision one of this section.

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

11 § 237-a. Student mental health, mental health literacy and training in
12 master plans of independent institutions of higher education. 1. The
13 regents plan for higher education, required to be developed and trans-
14 mitted pursuant to section two hundred thirty-seven of this part, and
15 approved master plans of independent institutions of higher education
16 shall include protocols and policies intended to improve the mental
17 health of students, improve mental health literacy among students,
18 faculty and support staff, and establish parity between physical and
19 mental health, including reasonable accommodations, whenever possible
20 and appropriate. The regents plan shall also require such institutions
21 to review, amend and publish enrollment, re-enrollment, medical leave of
22 absence, voluntary and involuntary leave, and termination policies for
23 students experiencing mental health issues or crises; improve responses
24 to mental health needs and crises; review and improve suicide prevention
25 and intervention policies; and provide appropriate staff training to all
26 full-time faculty, administrators, athletic coaches, student-facing and
27 support staff, as well as adjunct professors, to implement the above-re-
28 ferenced protocols and policies.

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

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