

Date of Hearing: June 19, 2018

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Jose Medina, Chair

SB 968 (Pan) – As Amended June 12, 2018

SENATE VOTE: 38-0

SUBJECT: Postsecondary education: mental health counselors

SUMMARY: Requires, contingent upon an appropriation of funds, the California State University (CSU), Board of Trustees, Board of Governors (BOG) of the California Community College (CCC) and requests the Regents of the University of California (UC) to have one full-time equivalent mental health counselor per 1,500 students enrolled at each of their respective campuses. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the Trustees of the CSU, BOG of the CCC and requests the Regents of the UC to have one full-time equivalent mental health counselor per 1,500 students enrolled at of their respective campuses.
- 2) Specifies that mental health counselors hired pursuant to this bill be full-time where possible, and efforts should be made so that mental health counselors reflect the diversity of the student body.
- 3) Requires that the minimum number of mental health counselors hired on a campus be based on the student population of that campus and states that additional mental health counselors may be hired in accordance with additional needs identified on a campus.
- 4) Requires CSU, CCC and requests UC by January 1, 2020, and every three years thereafter, to report to the Legislature as specified, how funding was spent and the number of mental health counselors employed on each of its campuses.
- 5) Requires each campus to collect the following data, without any personally identifiable information, to be included in a report to the Legislature as prescribed:
 - a) At least every three years, conduct a campus survey and focus groups to understand student needs and challenges regarding among other things, their mental health and emotional well-being; and,
 - b) Collect data on attempted suicides through self-reporting, mental health counselor records and known hospitalizations.
- 6) Specifies that data collected pursuant to this bill be conducted in a manner that is consistent with state and federal privacy law, including but not limited to, the Confidentiality of Medical Information Act and the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act.
- 7) Defines for purposes of this bill “mental health counselor,” to mean a person who provides individual counseling, group counseling crisis interventions, emergency services, referrals,

program evaluation and research, or provides outreach and consultation interventions to the campus community, or any combination of these and who is licensed in the State of California by the applicable licensing entity.

- 8) Makes various findings and declarations relative to the prevalence of mental illness among college students and the many benefits of mental health counseling including improved academic performance.
- 9) Makes implementation of provisions in this bill to be contingent upon appropriation of funds by the Legislature in the annual Budget Act or another statute for those purposes.
- 10) Establishes if the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, the state shall reimburse the applicable entities.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes, under the California Constitution, the UC, a public trust to be administered by the Regents of the UC and grants the Regents full powers of organization and government, subject only to such legislative control as may be necessary to insure security of its funds, compliance with the terms of its endowments, statutory requirements around competitive bidding and contracts, sales of property and the purchase of materials, goods and services. (Article IX, Section (9)(a) of the California Constitution)
- 2) Establishes the CSU, under the administration of the Trustees of the CSU, as one of the public postsecondary educational institutions in the state. (Education Code (EDC) Section 66602)
- 3) Requires that the CCC be administered by the BOG. (EDC Section 70901, et seq.)
- 4) Establishes the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), enacted by voters in 2004 as Proposition 63, to provide funds to counties to expand services, develop innovative programs, and integrated service plans for mentally ill children, adults, and seniors through a one percent income tax on personal income above \$1 million. The MHSA provides funding for programs within five components: Community Services and Supports, Prevention and Early Intervention, Innovation, Capital Facilities and Technological Needs, Workforce Education and Training.
- 5) Requires the Department of Health Care Services, in coordination with counties, to establish a program designed to prevent mental illnesses from becoming severe and disabling. Existing law requires prevention and early intervention programs to include specified components. (Welfare & Institutions Code Section 5840)

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, this bill's requirement for the segments to have one full-time mental health counselor for every 1,500 students is estimated to result in General Fund cost pressures of approximately \$10 to \$12 million for CSU to comply and anywhere from \$110 million to up to \$213 million in Proposition 98 General Fund for community college districts to comply. For the UC, General Fund cost pressures would be about \$1.9 million in the first year growing to \$9.9 million in the fifth year to keep up with student enrollment growth to comply with this measure.

COMMENTS: *Need for the bill.* According to the California Faculty Association, co-sponsors of this bill, "...campuses are experiencing a mental health crisis and there are not enough mental health counselors to deal with the crisis. Students face anxiety, depression, and stress as they confront challenges of campus life. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students claiming more than 1,100 lives every year nationally. For students of color, these challenges may be even more acute as they face additional stressors such as discrimination, immigration status, financial hardship, being the first in their families to attend college, and are less likely to access needed services." This bill seeks to ensure provision of mental health services for students by requiring in statute each campus meet a standard of one counselor to every 1,500 students and by establishing a system-wide reporting requirement to assess mental health on campus.

Data collection and use of student mental health records. In its review of the status of student mental health on California college campuses commissioned by the author, the California Research Bureau concludes that limitations in data from each segment prevent a full analysis of the extent to which student mental health is improving or deteriorating. The Research Bureau noted however, that information related to students' use of counseling centers shows an increasing percentage of students using counseling services on California colleges and universities. This bill requires a campus to survey its students as well as conduct focus groups every three-years regarding their mental and emotional health. Additionally, it requires collection of data on attempted suicides and authorizes mental health counselor records to be used in the collection of data relative to suicide attempts.

Recommended counselor to student ratio. The International Association of Counseling Services (IACS) recommends that colleges and universities maintain a ratio of one full-time equivalent mental health professional to every 1,000 to 1,500 students. IACS warns that exceeding the ratio may lead to students waiting for services that discourage students from seeking counseling at a center and are likely to leave the university. Delays in treatment could also present difficulties in providing services to students experiencing increasingly more severe psychological issues and impact academic success. The counselor to student ratio is an aspirational goal based on the needs of each campus and its existing resources. California Research Bureau reports that the Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors (AUCCD), an association that advocates for collegiate mental health, also recommends a ratio of no more than 1,500 students per counselor.

Existing mental health counselors on campuses. Of the three segments, it appears that UC meets the standards recommended by IACS and AUCCD. As of fall of 2017 UC reports its system-wide counselor to student ratio to be 1:1,156. To date, the CSU estimates about 221 full-time equivalent counselors system-wide with a ratio of 2,176 per one student. The CCC system has the widest gap to close. The CCC Chancellor's Office estimates about 300 counselors dispersed among its campuses (ratio of 1:7,667). To note, the ratios mentioned above reflect system-wide averages rather than by campus as required under this bill. All segments report wait-listing students as well as having procedures in place for providing immediate assistance for the most severe cases.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

American Academy of Pediatrics, California
California Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
California Association of Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors
California Board of Behavioral Sciences
California Faculty Association (Co-sponsor)
California Federation of Teachers
California State Student Association
National Alliance on Mental Illness-California
SEIU California (Co-sponsor)
Steinberg Institute

Opposition

None on file.

Analysis Prepared by: Kevin Powers / HIGHER ED. / (916) 319-3960