



HOUSE BILL 578: The Jason Flatt Act of North Carolina.

2025-2026 General Assembly

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| Committee: | House Education - K-12. If favorable, re-refer to Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House | Date: | April 29, 2025 |
| Introduced by: | Reps. Pickett, Lambeth, Hawkins, Budd | Prepared by: | Drupti Chauhan |
| Analysis of: | PCS to First Edition H578-CSRQ-9 | | Committee Counsel |

OVERVIEW: *House Bill 578 would require the State Board of Education (SBE) to include in its school-based mental health policy a suicide prevention education requirement. Public school units would be required to add a suicide prevention education requirement for school personnel. The Proposed Committee Substitute (PCS) would make technical changes, including adding a cross-reference to the residential schools statute.*

CURRENT LAW: The SBE must adopt a school-based mental health policy that includes (i) minimum requirements for a school-based mental health plan for K-12 school units and (ii) a model mental health training program and model suicide risk referral protocol for K-12 school units. The model mental health training program must be provided to school personnel who work with students in grades K-12 and address topics including youth mental health and suicide prevention. The model suicide risk referral protocol must be provided to school personnel who work with students in grades 6-12 and provide guidelines on the identification of students at risk of suicide and procedures and referral sources that address actions that should be taken to address the identified students. Each public school unit must provide its adopted mental health training program and suicide risk referral protocol to school personnel.

BILL ANALYSIS: The PCS for House Bill 578 would require the SBE to include a suicide prevention education requirement in its school-based mental health policy. The suicide prevention education must be provided to all licensed educators, and the education would provide more detail about the educator's role in youth suicide awareness than the model mental health training. The suicide prevention education may be done through self-review of suitable suicide prevention materials approved by the SBE. The SBE and the Department of Public Instruction would have to make suicide prevention education materials available to K-12 public school units at no cost.

Every K-12 public school unit would be required to adopt a suicide prevention education requirement as part of its plan for promoting student mental health and well-being. This education would be provided at no cost to employees. School personnel would be required to complete one hour of suicide prevention education every year, which would coincide with mental health trainings that occur after employees receive their initial mental health training. School personnel can meet the suicide prevention education requirement in several ways, including completion of approved programs.

Every five years, the Superintendent of Public Instruction would be required to review the SBE's minimum requirements for suicide prevention education and recommend any necessary changes. Public school units would have to include the suicide prevention education requirement as a part of their annual report on the content of the school-based mental health plan they have adopted. There would be no civil liability for

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the governing bodies, employees, and agents for harm caused by acts or omissions related to the implementation of, participation in, or provision of a suicide prevention education requirement. This immunity would not apply if the act or omission amounts to wanton conduct, gross negligence, or intentional wrongdoing.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This act would be effective when it becomes law and would apply beginning with the 2025-2026 school year.

**Stewart Sturkie, Staff Attorney, Legislative Analysis Division, significantly contributed to this summary.*