

1 HOUSE BILL NO. 385

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8 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION
9 PILOT PROGRAM; PROVIDING THAT THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION ADMINISTER THE
10 PROGRAM; ESTABLISHING PROGRAM PARAMETERS; PROVIDING A DEFINITION; ESTABLISHING
11 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE
12 DATE AND A TERMINATION DATE."

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14 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

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16 NEW SECTION. **Section 1. School mental health promotion pilot program.** (1) There is a school
17 mental health promotion pilot program administered by the office of public instruction. The purpose of the
18 program is to encourage and support schools in implementing innovative, student-led, and locally determined
19 mental health promotion initiatives.

20 (2) The office of public instruction shall solicit applications from school districts seeking to
21 participate in the program and award grants to applicants displaying:

22 (a) a specific need to address mental health concerns among students of one or more schools of
23 the district;

24 (b) that the application was developed and supported by:

25 (i) students;

26 (ii) parents;

27 (iii) certified and classified staff, administrators, and trustees of the school district; and

28 (iv) community members and organizations;

1 (c) an identification of and commitment to implement specific mental health promotion activities;

2 (d) plans to develop a program management team, including representatives from the groups
3 listed under subsection (2)(b); and

4 (e) plans to evaluate the effectiveness of the program using specific metrics and establishing a
5 baseline for those metrics prior to implementing mental health promotion activities under the program.

6 (3) (a) Contingent on and within appropriations for the program, the office of public instruction shall
7 award grants to school districts displaying the greatest need, preparation, and promise of successfully
8 implementing mental health promotion activities under the program. If possible, the office of public instruction
9 shall award grants to districts in a manner that ensures diversity of district size and geography.

10 (b) The office of public instruction shall award annual grants to school districts of not less than
11 \$10,000 or more than the lesser of an amount equal to \$25 for each enrolled student in a participating school in
12 the prior school year or \$50,000.

13 (c) A school district awarded a grant must receive the grant for 2 years and may reapply for a
14 second 2-year grant cycle.

15 (d) A school district receiving a grant under the program shall deposit the grant funds in the
16 district's miscellaneous programs fund and use the grant funds only for the costs of implementing mental health
17 promotion activities.

18 (4) (a) A school district receiving a grant under the program shall report to the office of public
19 instruction by July 15 of even numbered years. The report must include the following:

20 (i) an accounting of expenditures of grant funds;

21 (ii) a summary of mental health promotion activities implemented under the grant; and

22 (iii) an evaluation of the effectiveness of the grant in improving the mental health of students in
23 participating schools, including, if possible, the specific metrics under subsection (2)(e).

24 (b) The office of public instruction shall report, in accordance with 5-11-210, to the education
25 interim committee a compilation of the reports received under subsection (4)(a) and an agency evaluation of the
26 implementation of the program.

27 (5) As used in this section, the term "mental health promotion activities" means locally determined,
28 developmentally appropriate activities that may occur in or out of school aimed at improving the mental health

1 of the entire population of students at a school, decreasing stress, anxiety, and mental illness, and reducing the
2 incidence of violence, bullying, substance use, and self-harm. The term may include but is not limited to:

- 3 (a) modifications to the school schedule, such as later start times or block scheduling;
- 4 (b) reconfiguring of the school to increase the feeling of community and students being known by
5 peers and teachers;
- 6 (c) programs to increase parent and family involvement;
- 7 (d) intergenerational programs, such as foster grandparent programs or programs involving tribal
8 elders;
- 9 (e) reducing barriers to student access to individual or group counseling;
- 10 (f) implementing schoolwide initiatives, especially initiatives recommended for elementary and
11 secondary schools by the Montana suicide review team established in section 3, Chapter 353, Laws of 2013;
- 12 (g) peer mentoring programs and mentor programs utilizing community members;
- 13 (h) the use of creative arts and play;
- 14 (i) service learning and other community-based projects; and
- 15 (j) partnerships with youth development and empowerment organizations.

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17 **NEW SECTION. Section 2. Appropriation.** (1) There is appropriated \$250,000 from the general fund
18 to the office of public instruction in each year of the biennium beginning July 1, 2025, to be used for the
19 distribution of grants under [section 1].

20 (2) The legislature intends that the appropriation in this section be considered part of the ongoing
21 base for the next legislative session.

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23 **NEW SECTION. Section 3. Notification to tribal governments.** The secretary of state shall send a
24 copy of [this act] to each federally recognized tribal government in Montana.

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26 **NEW SECTION. Section 4. Codification instruction.** [Section 1] is intended to be codified as an
27 integral part of Title 20, chapter 7, part 13, and the provisions of Title 20, chapter 7, part 13, apply to [section 1].

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