

By: Thierry

H.B. No. 3407

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the establishment of a task force to address suicide prevention at public institutions of higher education.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Chapter 51, Education Code, is amended by adding Subchapter W-1 to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER W-1. TASK FORCE TO PREVENT SUICIDE AT INSTITUTIONS OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

Sec. 51.861. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Institution of higher education" has the meaning assigned by Section 61.003.

(2) "Task force" means the task force established under this subchapter.

Sec. 51.862. ESTABLISHMENT OF TASK FORCE. A task force is established under this subchapter to develop a strategy to prevent suicide at institutions of higher education.

Sec. 51.863. TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP. (a) The task force consists of 13 members appointed as follows:

(1) two members appointed by the governor;

(2) two members appointed by the lieutenant governor;

(3) two members appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives;

(4) four members appointed by the presiding officer of the task force;

1 (5) one representative from The University of Texas'
2 counseling and mental health center appointed by the chancellor of
3 The University of Texas System;

4 (6) one representative from Texas A&M University's
5 student counseling services appointed by the chancellor of The
6 Texas A&M University System; and

7 (7) one representative of the Department of State
8 Health Services appointed by the executive commissioner of the
9 Health and Human Services Commission.

10 (b) Members of the task force must be individuals who are:

11 (1) actively involved in the prevention of suicide and
12 the improvement of student welfare; or

13 (2) employed by an institution of higher education.

14 (c) Appointments to the task force shall be made without
15 regard to the race, color, disability, sex, religion, age, or
16 national origin of the appointee.

17 (d) A task force member is not entitled to compensation for
18 service on the task force.

19 (e) The presiding officer of the task force is the member
20 who represents The University of Texas' counseling and mental
21 health center.

22 (f) The task force shall meet at the call of the presiding
23 officer. The task force may meet by teleconference.

24 (g) Chapter 2110, Government Code, does not apply to the
25 task force.

26 Sec. 51.864. TASK FORCE DUTIES. (a) The task force shall
27 identify:

1 (1) all existing programs in the state relating to
2 preventing suicide at institutions of higher education; and

3 (2) the programs described by Subdivision (1) that
4 receive state money.

5 (b) The task force shall develop recommendations for
6 reducing suicide and for improving student welfare at institutions
7 of higher education. In developing recommendations, the task force
8 shall:

9 (1) gather information concerning suicide and student
10 welfare at institutions of higher education, including information
11 regarding:

12 (A) the race, gender, area of study, and year of
13 study for students who have committed suicide, attempted to commit
14 suicide, or sought services related to suicide from a counseling
15 center;

16 (B) protocols on each campus for responding to
17 students in distress, intervention, treatment, re-entry, and
18 post-crisis intervention;

19 (C) the availability of online resources and
20 hotlines;

21 (D) efforts to screen students for behavioral
22 health disorders and suicidal ideation;

23 (E) efforts to enforce suicide means restriction
24 and reduce access to lethal means;

25 (F) counselor-to-student ratios;

26 (G) student groups raising awareness about
27 suicide prevention and behavioral health problems; and

1 (H) social media coping resources, including
2 online resources;

3 (2) receive reports and testimony from individuals,
4 state and local governmental agencies, community-based
5 organizations, and other public and private organizations; and

6 (3) create goals for state policy that would prevent
7 suicide and improve student welfare at institutions of higher
8 education.

9 Sec. 51.865. SUPPORT AGENCY DUTIES. The Texas Higher
10 Education Coordinating Board, the Department of State Health
11 Services, The University of Texas System, and The Texas A&M
12 University System shall:

13 (1) provide administrative support services to the
14 task force;

15 (2) coordinate administrative responsibilities with
16 the task force to avoid unnecessary duplication of duties;

17 (3) share the costs of the task force, including
18 administrative expenses; and

19 (4) each designate a person to serve as a liaison with
20 the task force.

21 Sec. 51.866. CONSULTATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES; PRIVATE
22 FOUNDATIONS. (a) The task force shall consult with employees of
23 the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Department of
24 State Health Services, The University of Texas System, and The
25 Texas A&M University System as necessary to accomplish the task
26 force's responsibilities under this subchapter.

27 (b) The task force may collaborate as necessary with any

1 appropriate state agency, including institutions of higher
2 education.

3 (c) The task force may consult with private foundations that
4 have made a substantial commitment to the prevention of suicide to
5 accomplish the task force's responsibilities under this
6 subchapter.

7 Sec. 51.867. REPORT. Not later than December 1, 2018, the
8 task force shall prepare and submit to the governor, the lieutenant
9 governor, and the speaker of the house of representatives a report
10 that includes:

- 11 (1) a description of the activities of the task force;
12 (2) the findings of the task force on the current state
13 of suicide at institutions of higher education;
14 (3) recommendations on best practices for higher
15 education policies and protocols for preventing suicide; and
16 (4) any other matter the task force considers
17 appropriate.

18 Sec. 51.868. FUNDING; ACCOUNT. (a) The task force shall
19 review the funding strategies for the task force and develop
20 proposals for expanding the sources of funds available to finance
21 the activities of the task force.

22 (b) The task force may accept gifts and grants from
23 individuals or private or public organizations and accept federal
24 and local funds to support the task force.

25 (c) The suicide prevention task force account is an account
26 in the general revenue fund. Money in the account may be
27 appropriated only to the task force for the purposes of this

1 subchapter. The suicide prevention task force account is exempt
2 from the application of Section 403.095, Government Code. The
3 account consists of:

- 4 (1) gifts and grants to the task force;
5 (2) money received by the task force from federal,
6 state, or local government; and
7 (3) notwithstanding Section 404.071, Government Code,
8 all interest attributable to money held in the account.

9 Sec. 51.869. EXPIRATION. The task force is abolished and
10 this subchapter expires September 1, 2019.

11 SECTION 2. The members of the task force shall be appointed
12 as required by Section 51.863, Education Code, as added by this Act,
13 not later than October 1, 2017.

14 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
15 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
16 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
17 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
18 Act takes effect September 1, 2017.