

By: Zaffirini, Blanco
Powell

S.B. No. 1521

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to creating a mental health task force to study mental health services provided at institutions of higher education.

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

SECTION 1. Subchapter 2, Chapter 51, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 51.91931 to read as follows:

Sec. 51.91931. COLLABORATIVE TASK FORCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES. (a) In this section:

(1) "Coordinating board" means the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

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

(3) "Task force" means the Collaborative Task Force on Higher Education Mental Health Services.

(b) The Collaborative Task Force on Higher Education Mental Health Services is established to study and evaluate mental health services provided at institutions of higher education directly to students enrolled at the institution. The task force shall:

(1) research the capacity of institutions of higher education to identify and address the mental health needs of students, including for each institution:

(A) performing an equity analysis of the provision of services at the institution, including analyzing the number of mental health providers on campus, the length of time a

1 student must wait for an appointment, partner referrals, length of
2 treatment, and the types of services provided;

3 (B) the mental health provider-to-student
4 ratios;

5 (C) the number of community partnerships and
6 referrals for inpatient or outpatient mental health treatment;

7 (D) the total amount of funds and the total
8 amount of funds as a percentage of the institution's budget
9 allocated to direct mental health support services;

10 (E) campus-wide needs assessment of mental
11 health climate and student experiences accessing mental health
12 care; and

13 (F) staff and faculty mental health training
14 opportunities, such as mental health first aid and suicide
15 prevention initiatives, as well as staff and faculty opportunities
16 to receive mental health care;

17 (2) identify institutional, environmental, and social
18 barriers that directly impact student mental health and well-being;
19 and

20 (3) explore innovative and effective approaches to
21 meeting the mental health needs of students, with specific focus on
22 first generation college students, students of color, economically
23 disadvantaged students, students who are parents, students of
24 various sexual orientations, survivors of sexual assault, students
25 who are immigrants, students who are or were previously in the
26 conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective
27 Services, and students from rural communities, including:

- 1 (A) stigma reduction and awareness initiatives;
- 2 (B) peer support initiatives;
- 3 (C) action plans based on campus assessment;
- 4 (D) recruiting and retaining counseling staff of
5 color;
- 6 (E) telehealth accessibility and expansion; and
- 7 (F) addressing trauma and cultivating
8 resiliency.

9 (c) The task force is composed of:

10 (1) the commissioner of higher education or the
11 commissioner's designee;

12 (2) the following additional members appointed by the
13 commissioner of higher education:

14 (A) three students who are enrolled at an
15 institution of higher education in this state, at least one of whom
16 is enrolled in a certificate program or a junior college;

17 (B) two persons who provide mental health
18 services at an institution of higher education and who are:

19 (i) a psychologist, as defined by Section
20 501.002, Occupations Code;

21 (ii) a licensed professional counselor, as
22 defined by Section 503.002, Occupations Code; or

23 (iii) a licensed clinical social worker, as
24 defined by Section 505.002, Occupations Code;

25 (C) one person who is a psychiatrist;

26 (D) two persons who are higher education
27 administrators and who oversee the provision of mental health

1 services at an institution of higher education;

2 (E) one person who is a member of a foundation
3 that invests in mental health services provided at institutions of
4 higher education;

5 (F) one person who is an employee of an
6 institution of higher education designated under Subsection (k) or
7 (l); and

8 (G) three people who are employees of nonprofit
9 organizations that specialize in mental health for young adults or
10 college students; and

11 (3) for any other entity the task force considers
12 necessary, one person appointed by the task force for each such
13 entity.

14 (d) Persons appointed to serve on the task force shall be
15 selected to represent the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic
16 diversity of this state.

17 (e) Chapter 2110, Government Code, does not apply to the
18 task force.

19 (f) The commissioner of higher education is designated as
20 the interim presiding officer for purposes of calling and
21 conducting the initial meeting of the task force.

22 (g) The task force:

23 (1) shall at its initial meeting select a presiding
24 officer from among its members for the purpose of calling and
25 conducting meetings; and

26 (2) may select an assistant presiding officer and a
27 secretary from among its members.

1 (h) A member of the task force may not receive compensation
2 or reimbursement for service on the task force.

3 (i) After its initial meeting, the task force shall meet at
4 least twice each year at a time and place determined by the
5 presiding officer. The task force may meet at other times the task
6 force considers appropriate. The presiding officer may call a
7 meeting on the presiding officer's own motion.

8 (j) The task force may meet by teleconference.

9 (k) The commissioner of higher education shall designate
10 one institution of higher education with experience in evaluating
11 mental health services to serve as the lead institution for the task
12 force. The institution designated under this subsection shall
13 provide faculty, staff, and administrative support services to the
14 task force as determined necessary by the task force.

15 (l) The commissioner of higher education shall designate
16 two institutions of higher education with experience in evaluating
17 mental health services to assist the task force and the lead
18 institution.

19 (m) In making a designation under Subsections (k) and (l),
20 the commissioner of higher education shall give preference to at
21 least one predominantly black institution, as defined by 20 U.S.C.
22 Section 1067q(c)(9).

23 (n) The coordinating board shall maintain the data
24 collected by the task force and the work product of the task force.

25 (o) The task force shall ensure that data gathered,
26 information studied, and evaluations conducted under this section:

27 (1) are collected and maintained in compliance with

1 federal law regarding confidentiality of student medical or
2 educational information, including the Health Insurance
3 Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (42 U.S.C. Section 1320d
4 et seq.) and any state law relating to the privacy of student or
5 health information; and

6 (2) may not be shared with a federal agency or state
7 agency, except as otherwise provided by law.

8 (p) The coordinating board may accept gifts, grants, or
9 donations on behalf of the task force to carry out the task force's
10 duties under this section.

11 (q) Not later than December 1, 2024, the task force shall
12 submit to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the
13 house of representatives, and the coordinating board a report of
14 the results of the task force's activities conducted under this
15 section and any recommendations for legislative or other action.

16 (r) The task force is abolished and this section expires
17 September 1, 2025.

18 SECTION 2. This Act takes effect September 1, 2021.