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HOUSE BILL NO. 495

Offered January 14, 2026

Prefiled January 12, 2026

A BILL to amend and reenact § 22.1-298.6 of the Code of Virginia and to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 22.1-279.11, relating to school boards; mental health awareness training; anonymous reporting system; assessment of risk of violence and prevention of student harm to self or others.

 Patron—Guzman

 Committee Referral Pending

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 22.1-298.6 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 22.1-279.11 as follows:

§ 22.1-279.11. School boards; anonymous reporting system; assessment of risk of violence and prevention of student harm to self or others.

Each school board is encouraged to contract with a private nonprofit organization to procure and make available an anonymous reporting system for the assessment of risk of violence and the prevention of student harm to self or others that includes the following features and components:

1. A secure, certified Service Organization Control 2 (SOC 2) compliant platform for students to submit messages and tips relating to violence or harm to self or others by telephone, website, and a multiplatform compatible mobile application;

2. Student access, 24 hours per day, seven days per week, and 365 days per year, to a national crisis center that is staffed by a team of highly skilled and trained crisis counselors who have experience in psychology, social work, counseling, and education; who are fluent in multiple languages; who are trained in violence risk assessment, suicide prevention, crisis management, and mental health support; and whose sole duty is to respond to messages and tips from students relating to violence or harm to self or others;

3. Ongoing program support, including onboarding, professional development, and promotion; and

4. Curricula and training for student and adult users available in in-person, live virtual webinar, and prerecorded virtual webinar format.

§ 22.1-298.6. Mental health awareness training.

A. Each school board shall adopt and implement policies that require (i) each teacher and other relevant personnel, as determined by the school board, employed on a full-time basis, and (ii) each school bus driver to complete a mental health awareness training or similar program at least once. No school board shall require an employee to complete such training outside of the employee's regular working hours unless the employee is compensated for the time spent completing the training at an hourly rate of not less than one and one-half times the employee's average hourly rate of pay.

B. Each school board shall provide required personnel the training required by subsection A and may contract with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, a community services board, a behavioral health authority, a nonprofit organization, or other certified trainer as defined in § 37.2-312.2 to provide such training. Such training may be provided via an online module.

INTRODUCED

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