

HB 1656 -- JASON FLATT ACT-SUICIDE PREVENTION

SPONSOR: Dunn

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass by Consent" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 11 to 0. Voted "Do Pass by Consent" by the Select Committee on Rules by a vote of 8 to 0.

This bill requires training in suicide awareness and prevention and will be known as the "Jason Flatt Act."

The annual training must occur through in-service training programs offered by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) or through professional development programs offered by the school district.

DESE must develop a list of approved training materials to fulfill the training requirements, which may include how to identify appropriate mental health services and when and how to refer youth and their families to them.

Each school district must adopt a policy on student suicide prevention in consultation with specified entities and experts. The policy must address, at a minimum, procedures relating to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention. DESE must develop a model policy that school districts may adopt.

The training, or lack thereof, must not be construed as imposing a specific duty of care and no person will have a cause of action for any loss or damage caused by any act or omission resulting from the implementation of these provisions.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that it's not every day we have a chance to pass legislation that can literally save lives. This bill will help to prevent suicide among children, which is the leading cause of death, second only to accidents, for young people. The death of a child is something no parent can fathom unless they have lost one. Many children with depression don't like to tell others about it due to the stigma associated with it and other mental health issues. One suicide affects, on average, 100 people. This bill will help children become healthy, and healthy children become healthy adults. Many children are afraid to talk about mental illness because it makes them look weak. Public educators receive many hours of training a year; there is probably no training more important than the training found in this bill.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Dunn; Missouri Education Reform Council; AFT St. Louis Local 420; National

Association Of Social Workers; Rick Cantor; Carol Canter; and Dr. Robin Lady.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.