LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 1028

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
218th LEGISLATURE

SUMMARY

DATED: DECEMBER 17, 2019

Synopsis: Establishes training program to prevent suicide by law enforcement officer; requires reporting of law enforcement officer suicides to Attorney General.

Type of Impact: One-time and Periodic State cost increases; periodic local cost increases; periodic cost increases for public institutions of higher education.

Agencies Affected: Department of Law and Public Safety; Department of Human Services; County and Municipal Law Enforcement Agencies; Campus police departments at public institutions of higher education.

Office of Legislative Services Estimate

Fiscal Impact	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
State, County, and Municipal Cost Increase		Indeterminate	
Public Institutions of Higher Education Cost Increase		Indeterminate	

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) projects that the bill may result in a one-time marginal State expenditure by the Department of Law and Public Safety (DLPS) and the Department of Human Services (DHS) to develop curriculum or update current law enforcement suicide prevention curriculum training programs. Any further periodic cost increases would result from the intermittent updating of the course curriculum, instruction, and examination.

- The OLS estimates the State's expenditure increase to be marginal because the Police Training Commission's (PTC) current training curriculum published online appears already to encompass most of the requirements set forth in this bill and the Attorney General recently announced implementation of the *New Jersey Resiliency Program for Law Enforcement*, which provides mental health support and training. The OLS estimates meeting the requirements of this bill may not be overly labor-intensive and the concerned departments may be able to absorb the additional workload within their existing operating budgets.

- The bill requires the in-service training be administered to each law enforcement officer every five years following the officer's date of initial appointment and so the timing of the associated costs will vary among law enforcement agencies.

- The bill requires the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) to maintain records of any incident of a law enforcement officer's suicide Statewide as reported by the officer's respective agency and make the information publicly available for use in suicide prevention and intervention studies. The aggregation of this data should have only a marginal associated cost.

BILL DESCRIPTION

This bill requires the DLPS, in consultation with the DHS, to establish a training curriculum designed to prevent suicide committed by law enforcement officers. In addition, the bill requires the chief law enforcement officer or a designee to report to the OAG any incident of a completed suicide by a law enforcement officer employed by their respective agency or department.

The bill requires the training curriculum to include the causes, behaviors, warning signs, and risk factors associated with officer suicide. In addition, the training curriculum is required to: 1) identify appropriate intervention strategies to be used by law enforcement departments to effectively prevent officer suicide, and 2) provide information concerning programs that offer crisis intervention and counseling services to law enforcement officers.

Under the bill, the DLPS is required to make the curriculum available to each State, county, municipal, and college campus law enforcement department to be used as part of in-service training for law enforcement officers. The bill requires the in-service training to be administered to each law enforcement officer every five years following the officer's date of initial appointment.

The bill also requires the chief law enforcement officer of each State, county, and municipal law enforcement agency and campus police department to report within a reasonable time to the OAG any incident of a completed suicide by a law enforcement officer employed by their respective agency or department. The report is required to include a specific list of collected information, but prohibits the report from identifying the law enforcement officer by name or date of birth.

Under the bill, the Attorney General is required to aggregate the data and make it publicly available for use in suicide prevention and intervention studies. The bill clarifies that the report is not to replace or alter any other requirement of law, professional standard, or obligation that requires the law enforcement agency to evaluate a death or report a suicide.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

None received.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

The OLS projects that the bill may result in a one-time marginal State expenditure by the DLPS and the DHS to develop curriculum or update current law enforcement suicide prevention

curriculum training programs. Any further periodic cost increases would result from the intermittent updating of the course curriculum, instruction, and examination.

The OLS estimates the State's expenditure increase to be marginal because the PTC's current training curriculum published online appears already to encompass most of the requirements set forth in this bill and the OAG has recently announced a mental health support program for law enforcement officers in an effort to prevent suicides. The OLS cannot estimate the cost to develop and provide training to law enforcement officers or for the OAG to maintain records of law enforcement officers suicides; however, OLS estimates that meeting the requirements of this bill may not be overly labor-intensive and that the concerned departments may be able to absorb the additional workload within their existing operating budgets.

The PTC supervises the administration of basic police training programs. As part of that task, the commission is responsible for the development, periodic review and revision, and certification of basic training courses for county and local police, sheriffs' officers, state and county investigators, state and county corrections officers, juvenile detention officers, and a number of other law enforcement positions, as well as several instructor development courses. According to its website, PTC training courses are revised and updated on an ongoing basis as necessitated by legislation, court decisions, and advances in technology and the state of knowledge regarding law enforcement practices.

Further, in 2019 the *New Jersey Resiliency Program for Law Enforcement* was established by the OAG and requires that all New Jersey police officers finish a two-day training course on coping mechanisms by the end of 2022. The program also requires at least one member of every State, county chief resiliency officer who is responsible for the program locally so that law enforcement officers can connect with help if needed.

Since January 1, 2016, New Jersey has experienced 37 law enforcement suicides according to Blue H.E.L.P., a Massachusetts nonprofit dedicated to helping officers with PTSD, depression and other mental health struggles. Nationwide in 2019, there have been at least 212 law enforcement suicides in the United States. That figure, which includes 31 retired officers, puts the nation on pace for the highest total in at least the past four years. During the 2018 calendar year, 172 law enforcement officers committed suicide. The Supporting and Treating Officers in Crisis (STOIC) Act was enacted July 2019. This federal legislation authorized up to $7.5 million in grant funding a year for police suicide prevention efforts, mental health screenings, and training to identify officers at risk.

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This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).