

SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

SENATE, No. 1730

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JANUARY 6, 2020

The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 1730 (1R).

This bill requires the Department of Law and Public Safety (DLPS), in consultation with the Department of Human Services, 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 Office of the Attorney General 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 Office of the Attorney General any incident of a completed suicide by a law enforcement officer employed by their respective agency or department. The report is required to include: the month and year during which the law enforcement officer's death occurred; the law enforcement officer's age, salary, and length of service with the law enforcement agency at the time of the officer's death; the race and gender of the law enforcement officer; any known facts pertaining to the cause or method of suicide; and the veteran status and level of education of the law enforcement officer. The bill 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.

As reported by the committee, Senate Bill No. 1730 (1R) is identical to Assembly Bill No. 1028 (1R), which also was reported by the committee on this date.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) notes that three provisions of the bill may increase expenditures by the State, local government entities, and public institutions of higher education.

First, the OLS projects that the bill may result in a one-time State expenditure increase to the DLPS and the Department of Human Services to develop a training curriculum designed to prevent suicide committed by law enforcement officers. The OLS estimates that the expenditure increase will be minimal because the Police Training Commission's current training curriculum published online appears already to encompass most of the curriculum requirements set forth in this bill and the Attorney General recently announced the implementation of the New Jersey Resiliency Program for Law Enforcement, which provides mental health support and training.

Second, the bill requires the suicide prevention curriculum to be taught to each officer every five years following the officer's date of initial appointment as part of the officer's in-service training. It is unclear whether this requirement will result in additional in-service training hours. If so, then the State, local government entities, and public institutions of higher education would incur additional annual expenditures.

Third, the bill may increase the annual expenditures of the State, local government entities, and public institutions of higher education in requiring that each law enforcement agency and campus police department report to the DLPS, in a manner to be prescribed by the department, any incident of a completed suicide by a law enforcement officer employed by the respective agency or department. Depending on operating decisions, the DLPS may incur additional annual expenditures in compiling the information.