

Testimony
House Bill No. 1312
Senate Education Committee
Senator Elkin, Chairman
March 8, 2023

Chairman Elkin, and members of the Senate Education Committee, I am Pamela Sagness, Behavioral Health Executive Director with the Department of Health and Human Services (Department). I appear before you in support of House Bill 1312.

The proposed change in this bill is to extend the current expiration date of section 50-06-05.1, from June 30, 2025 to June 30, 2027.

Last session language was added to subsection 28 on page 6 regarding the powers and duties of the Department of Health and Human Services directing the Department:

To provide resources on mental health awareness and suicide prevention to the behavioral health resource coordinator at each public school and to the designated individual at a nonpublic school. The resources must include information on identifying warning signs, risk factors, and the availability of resources in the community, and also must include an evidence-based, online virtual mental health and suicide prevention simulation-based training program that incorporates hands-on practice, contextual learning, and personalized feedback through interactive role-playing. The provisions of chapter 54-44.4 do not apply to the online virtual mental health and suicide prevention simulation-based training program under this subsection.

The Department has implemented the online virtual mental health and suicide prevention program. The program is available at no cost to anyone working in a K12 school in North Dakota. To date there have been more than 1113 individual activations for the program. I also provided a handout with additional information including a map of counties and survey results from participants. We are requesting an additional two years to continue implementation of the program as we have been able to secure funding to continue this important work into the 25-27 biennium.

Subsection 28 on page 11 shows the language that will remain after the June 30, 2027 date.

This concludes my testimony. I would be happy to try to answer any questions. Thank you.