

# SENATE BILL 310

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By: **Senator Simonaire**

Introduced and read first time: January 13, 2025

Assigned to: Education, Energy, and the Environment

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Education – Youth Suicide Prevention School Program – Revisions**

3 FOR the purpose of altering the requirements of the Youth Suicide Prevention School  
4 Program to increase pupil awareness of the relationship between gambling and  
5 youth suicide; and generally relating to the Youth Suicide Prevention School  
6 Program.

7 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
8 Article – Education  
9 Section 7–501 and 7–504  
10 Annotated Code of Maryland  
11 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2024 Supplement)

12 Preamble

13 WHEREAS, Researchers at the National Institutes of Health found in 2024 that  
14 rates of preteen suicide (ages 8–12) have been increasing by approximately 8% annually  
15 since 2008; and

16 WHEREAS, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that suicide was  
17 the second leading cause of death among individuals between the ages of 10–14 and 25–34,  
18 and the third leading cause of death among individuals between 15–24; and

19 WHEREAS, Research out of the University of Glasgow in 2023 has shown that  
20 gambling is linked to a heightened risk of suicide attempts among young adults (ages  
21 16–24) who experienced an increase in severity of gambling problems and were 2.74 times  
22 more likely to attempt suicide than those whose gambling was unchanged; and

23 WHEREAS, The first of Maryland’s six casinos opened in 2008 with slot machines,  
24 table games for casinos were approved in 2012, and sports betting has been available online  
25 and on mobile apps since 2022; and

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 WHEREAS, The Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey showed that youth gambling  
2 is increasing as 17.5% of high school students reported gambling in the last year compared  
3 to two years ago when 15.3% reported gambling; and

4 WHEREAS, The Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling showed that  
5 five of seven Maryland youth focus groups mentioned advertising as one of the biggest  
6 reasons people gamble and Maryland youth are exposed to this general advertising on a  
7 consistent basis; and

8 WHEREAS, The Maryland Youth Suicide Prevention School Program must continue  
9 to adapt to the growing challenges facing youth suicide, especially with the increased  
10 creation of conventional and online gambling in the State; and

11 WHEREAS, The Blueprint for Maryland's Future works to help combat youth  
12 suicide by recognizing student behavioral health issues and students experiencing trauma  
13 or violence out of school and includes ways to provide these students with behavioral health  
14 services; now, therefore,

15 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
16 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

17 **Article – Education**

18 7–501.

19 The General Assembly finds and declares that:

20 (1) A statewide Youth Suicide Prevention School Program is essential to  
21 address the continuing problem of youth suicide throughout the State;

22 (2) The youth suicide problem often exists in combination with other  
23 problems, including drug abuse [and], alcohol use, **AND GAMBLING ADDICTION;**

24 **(3) A SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM FOR YOUNG PEOPLE MUST**  
25 **RECOGNIZE STUDENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ISSUES, RECOGNIZE STUDENTS**  
26 **EXPERIENCING TRAUMA OR VIOLENCE OUT OF SCHOOL, AND REFER STUDENTS TO**  
27 **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES;**

28 **[(3)] (4)** A suicide prevention program for young people must emphasize  
29 a partnership between educational programs at the State and local levels and community  
30 suicide prevention and crisis center agencies;

31 **[(4)] (5)** It is of vital importance that a statewide Youth Suicide  
32 Prevention School Program be established with shared responsibility at both the State and

1 county levels, and that this cooperation shall be a major tool in efforts to achieve the  
2 successful prevention of youth suicide; and

3            ~~[(5)]~~ **(6)** County suicide prevention and crisis center agencies along with  
4 local education agencies are best suited for developing and implementing programs for  
5 statewide youth suicide prevention.

6 7-504.

7            (a) (1) The Department shall adopt regulations that set eligibility guidelines  
8 for State funding of Youth Suicide Prevention School Programs under this subtitle.

9            (2) The regulations shall:

10                    (i) Establish procedures for developing local programs, in  
11 cooperation with local education agencies, youth service bureaus, and community mental  
12 health centers; and

13                    (ii) Establish standards and policies for programs to offer:

14                            1. Individual, family, and group counseling related to youth  
15 suicide prevention;

16                            2. Referral, crisis intervention, and information for students,  
17 parents, and school personnel; and

18                            3. Training for school personnel, and others responsible for  
19 counseling or supervising student activities.

20            (b) A Youth Suicide Prevention School Program established under this subtitle  
21 shall plan, fund, and implement educational programs, which may include any of the  
22 following:

23            (1) Classroom instruction designed to achieve any of the following  
24 objectives:

25                    (i) Encourage sound decision making and promote ethical  
26 development;

27                    (ii) Increase pupils' awareness of the relationship between drug and  
28 alcohol use, **GAMBLING**, and youth suicide;

29                    (iii) Teach pupils to recognize signs of suicidal tendencies, and other  
30 facts about youth suicide;

31                    (iv) Inform pupils of available community youth suicide prevention  
32 services;

1 (v) Enhance school climate and relationships between teachers,  
2 counselors, and pupils; and

3 (vi) Further cooperative efforts of school personnel and community  
4 youth suicide prevention program personnel;

5 (2) School or community based alternative programs outside of the  
6 classroom, including:

7 (i) Positive peer group programs;

8 (ii) A 24-hour "hotline" telephone service, staffed by trained  
9 professional counselors;

10 (iii) Programs to collect data on youth suicide attempts;

11 (iv) Intervention and follow-up;

12 (v) Mental health programs to promote mental health awareness  
13 and encourage pupils to seek help as soon as it is needed; and

14 (vi) Parent education and training programs; and

15 (3) Teacher training programs.

16 (c) Any program established under this subtitle shall:

17 (1) Assist in increasing the awareness, among school personnel and  
18 community leaders, of the incidence of teenage suicide;

19 (2) Train school personnel in individual and schoolwide strategies for  
20 teenage suicide prevention;

21 (3) Develop and implement school-based teenage suicide prevention  
22 programs and pilot projects;

23 (4) Develop and implement school-based pilot mental health programs and  
24 peer-to-peer support to address the needs of students suffering from mental illness; and

25 (5) Through cooperative efforts, utilize community resources in the  
26 development and implementation of teenage suicide prevention programs under this  
27 subtitle.

28 (d) The Department may assist local school systems in implementing pilot  
29 peer-to-peer mental health awareness programs.

1           SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July  
2   1, 2025.