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Testimony for Senate Bill 1015  
Task Force to Study Access to Mental Health Care in Higher Education  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs  
March 12, 2020

  
Chairman  and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 1015: Task Force to Study Access to Mental Health Care in Higher Education. This bill is a response to the mental health crisis in our state, specifically among university students.


A number of factors drive the need to improve access to mental health care in higher education. An increasing number of students are coming to our universities with histories of mental health issues. The rates of depression continue to rise, as well. Once at an institution, societal stressors including substance abuse, social media, and intensified expectations increase the need for mental health services.

Mental health issues have been shown to increase the likelihood that an individual will drop out of school and negatively impacts grade point average. Universities struggle to provide crisis counseling, personal counseling, mental health counseling, health and wellness programs, and substance use assessment and counseling.

Senate Bill 1015 establishes a task force to study which models can best improve access among institutions of higher education. The task force must study existing policies, examine the challenges that institutions face, review best practices, identify the best models, and identify concerns in rural areas. The task force must also make recommendations on ways to reduce costs, the use of telemedicine and hotlines, and the implementation of general mental health counseling services. The task force will report interim findings by December 1, 2020 and a final report by December 1, 2021.

I respectfully ask for a favorable report of Senate Bill 1015. Thank you.

Best Regards,

  
Senator Addie Eckardt