



State Fiscal Note for Bill Number: 2022-H-6667

Date of State Budget Office Approval: Tuesday, February 15, 2022

Date Requested: Wednesday, January 26, 2022

Date Due: Saturday, February 5, 2022

<i>Impact on Expenditures</i>		<i>Impact on Revenues</i>	
FY 2022	-	FY 2022	-
FY 2023	-	FY 2023	-
FY 2024	-	FY 2024	-

Explanation by State Budget Office: This bill established RIGL Section 16-21-40, entitled “Health and Safety of Pupils.” It asserts that the commissioner of elementary and secondary education shall establish trauma-informed practices within all elementary and secondary schools throughout the state. The intent of the bill is that these practices would acknowledge that traumatic experiences are common among students and can affect learning, behavior, and relationships, but do not necessarily need to undermine student’s ability to achieve success.

Comments on Sources of Funds: This act shall take effect upon passage.
Given the largely definitional nature of the legislation, the Budget Office assumes this bill would not impact general revenues, restricted receipts, or other funds. However, it may make it possible for the state to take advantages of federal funding available for the implementation of trauma-informed care.

Summary of Facts and Assumptions: According to the non-profit Crisis Prevention Institute, by age 16 more than two thirds of young people experience a potentially traumatic event. Students who have experienced trauma have been shown to increase the likelihood of developmental problems, limiting academic potential, and impeding their ability to communicate the need for getting help.

This bill’s establishment of trauma-informed practices in schools would aim to help create learning environments where all students and adults feel safe and supported and would discourage the use of harsh disciplinary practices that do not acknowledge underlying causes of behavior. It is largely modeled after similar legislation introduced in Massachusetts in 2019, titled the “Trauma-Informed Schools Act of 2019,” produced a result of collaboration between Massachusetts Advocates for Children’s (MAC) Trauma Learning and Policy Initiative (TLPI) and Harvard Law School.

The bill did not receive a vote. However, in 2014, work papers produced by MAC led to the passage of a law (MGL c.69, sec 1P) titled “The Safe and Supportive Schools Framework,” which established a definition for safe and supportive learning environments, including provisions for items such as trauma sensitivity, bullying prevention, children’s mental health and positive behavioral approaches to reduce suspensions and expulsions. This Act also required the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop a state-wide Safe and Supportive Schools Framework, provide a self-assessment tool to help schools develop action

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plans for implementing the Framework and provide technical assistance as subject to appropriation. The law also established a Safe and Supportive Schools Grant program, which allocates small amounts of money to eligible school districts for action planning and implementation consistent with the framework outlined by the law. While the legislation passed in 2014 is more expansive than H-22-6667 and the similar Massachusetts bill, the total amounts allocated in recent years for the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework grant have been \$231,900 (2018), \$369,864 (2019) and \$126,000 (2020). The Budget Office includes this information to provide a general point of reference.

A similar bill to H-22-6667 was also proposed in Washington D.C. with the purpose of establishing the same definitions for trauma and amending the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 “to provide criteria for the use of Federal funds to support trauma-informed practices in schools, and for other purposes.” An important clause included in the bill proposed in Washington D.C. but not in Rhode Island holds that funds be used in “Providing training for all teachers, school leaders, paraprofessionals and specialized instructional support personnel on trauma-informed practices.”

While the Budget Office assumes that no direct costs would necessarily result from passage of this bill, a comprehensive implementation of trauma-informed practices may require expenditures including start-up training, ongoing training, and monitoring and evaluation. Such activities would require state appropriations or else fall upon LEAs to finance with existing general education aid.

Given that the bill’s language largely serves to establish definitions for trauma and trauma-based practices, it would be at the discretion of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to determine how best practices are developed, implemented, and measured. Due to the largely definitional nature of the bill, the Budget Office estimates no immediate cost impact but acknowledges the possibility of future costs according to how closely compliance with the bill would be monitored. It is also possible that this bill would create opportunities for the agency to receive federal funding for improving efforts to comply with the legislation, if subsequent language were included for the establishment of programs specifically for students affected by various trauma.

According to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Project AWARE grants received from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) are current initiatives closest to the provisions described in the bill. The funds support system level work for behavioral health within a multi-tiered system of supports framework. The system wide professional development and technical assistance described in the legislation is aligned with this work. Selected districts receive \$360,000 per year over a 5-year period. These funds support a district level coordinator to oversee the work. The funds may support a school level Social Emotional Learning support/interventionist to support adults in schools to adopt new practices that support student social and emotional health from a trauma informed framework. The additional funds support district/school selected professional development and technical assistance based on results of a needs assessment.

*Summary of Fiscal
Impact:*

The bill takes effect upon passage, the Budget Office assumes that this bill would not take effect until July 1, 2022.

The Budget Office does not estimate a state fiscal impact of this bill for FY 2022, FY 2023, or FY 2024. However, as outlined above, while no direct costs are assumed, any expenditures to support the implementation of trauma informed practices would be subject to appropriation.

Budget Office Signature:



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Fiscal Advisor Signature:



