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OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

Office of Research
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Office

S.B. 253
133rd General Assembly

Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

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Version: As Introduced

Primary Sponsor: Sen. Kunze

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: No

Dan Redmond, Budget Analyst

Highlights

- School districts and other public schools that opt to require an expelled student to undergo a mental health assessment before returning to school may incur increased costs if they also opt to pay for them.
- The bill may also lead to an increase in caseloads for any state or local entity that employs mental health service providers. Much of the cost to these entities will be reimbursed by either Medicaid or private insurance providers, or paid for by the local alcohol, drug addiction, and mental health (ADAMH) services board.
- The bill may increase the administrative workload of school districts and other public schools and the Department of Public Safety (DPS) with respect to reports of certain student threats.

Detailed Analysis

Student expulsion for communicating certain threats

Under continuing law, school district superintendents generally may expel students for serious violations of the district's or school's code of conduct for up to 80 school days. Longer expulsions are required if a student brings a firearm to school, and permitted if a student commits certain other acts. The bill permits school districts to adopt a resolution authorizing superintendents to expel students for a period of up to a year for threats to kill or do physical harm to persons or property under certain conditions.

Mental health assessments

Students subject to expulsion under the bill are entitled to the same due process procedures as students subject to other types of expulsion. However, the bill also permits districts to require, as a condition of reinstatement, that the student subject to expulsion

undergo an assessment to determine if the student poses a danger to themselves or other students or school employees. The bill does not specify who is to perform or pay for the assessments. Thus, it appears that school districts adopting a policy under the bill requiring such assessments may provide for them or may leave the assessment to be performed at the parent's expense, or perhaps some combination of both.¹ The bill may lead to an increase in caseloads for any state or local entity that employs mental health service providers. Much of the cost to these entities will be reimbursed by either Medicaid or private insurance providers, or paid for by the local alcohol, drug addiction, and mental health (ADAMH) services board where the student resides.

Ohio School Safety Center

The bill codifies the Ohio School Safety Center within the Department of Public Safety's (DPS) Division of Homeland Security and requires the Center to develop a threat reporting mechanism for public and chartered nonpublic schools. The Center was created in August 2019 via executive order² and currently operates a statewide, anonymous, "24/7" school safety tip line called SaferOH to allow individuals to anonymously share information with school officials and law enforcement about threats to student safety. DPS's Threat Assessment and Prevention Unit processes any tips it receives and works with local law enforcement on their disposition. The SaferOH tip line is offered free of charge to every school in the state. It may be that the tip line is used in a manner that satisfies the bill's reporting requirements. Otherwise, the administrative workload of DPS may increase to develop and implement a mechanism specifically for district superintendents or school chief administrative officers to make the required reports.

School reporting of threats

The bill also may increase the administrative workload of school districts and other public schools by requiring districts and schools to report to the School Safety Center any student threats to kill or do physical harm, regardless of whether the school has taken disciplinary action. In addition, the bill requires districts and schools to post the SaferOH telephone number conspicuously throughout schools and on their websites. The Ohio School Safety Center provides free promotional posters and cards to schools that register their information with the SaferOH tip line service (registration is not required to use the tip line).

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¹ For example, it may be that the district contracts with a licensed mental health professional to perform the assessments, but also gives a parent the option to seek an outside mental health professional at the parent's expense.

² [Executive Order 2019-21D](#).