Mental Health America

# Legislative Session Update

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A Senate subcommittee considers that chamber's Health and Human Services Appropriations bill. (Photo by The Capitol Group.)

## *Overtime* Arrives at the Statehouse

The 2025 edition of the Iowa Legislature will be working overtime when they return to Des Moines next week.

The 110th calendar day of the session, which is the unofficial end of the 2025 Legislative Session, arrived today, Friday, May 2.

With earnest negotiations on agriculture, natural resources and infrastructure spending bills now ongoing between the House and Senate, a conclusion to the current legislative session is possible within one to two weeks.

We will keep you updated.

## Continuation of School MH Funds In Ed Spending Bills

Education spending bills have recently been introduced in both chambers of the Iowa Legislature.

While differences in spending for special projects and programs are evident between the two proposals, one line item of interest to MHA appears in both education funding proposals, House Study Bill 337 and Senate Study Bill 1231.

Both pieces of legislation contain the continuation of funding for the Children's Mental Health-School Based Training and Support program at $3.183 million dollars.

# Bills of Interest

(HF - House File, HSB - House Study Bill, HR House Resolution, SF - Senate File, SSB - Senate Study Bill, SR - Senate Resolution) (F - For, A - Against, M - Monitoring)

SF 615 (formerly SF 599 and SF 363) - Public Assistance Programs (M) - This bill relates to work requirements for the Iowa health and wellness plan, public assistance programs, an information technology fund, the public assistance modernization fund, and the Medicaid for employed people with disabilities program and program review and report.
Approved by the Senate 33-15. Amended and approved by the House 61-35. On Senate debate calendar

SSB 1237 - Health and Human Services Appropriations (M) - Included in this bill is a provision which prohibits fiscal year 2026 moneys allocated for Medicaid from being used for sex reassignment surgery or treatment related to an individual's gender dysphoria diagnosis.
Approved by subcommittee

SSB 1231 - Education Appropriations (M) - Included in this budget bill is a continuation of $3.183 million in funding for the Children's Mental Health-School Based Training and Support program.
Approved by subcommittee

HF 883 (formerly HF 543) - Hygiene Products in Schools (M) - This bill requires school boards to ensure that feminine hygiene products can be accessed by students without cost in at least half of the restrooms in school buildings in the district where students in grades 6 through 12 are educated and that the supply of feminine hygiene products is refilled regularly. The bill defines "feminine hygiene products" as sanitary napkins, tampons, or other similar items used for feminine hygiene.
The bill appropriates an amount necessary to fund the full cost of compliance with the bill by school districts from the general fund of the state to the department of education for the period beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2028.
On House debate calendar

HF 844 (formerly HF 334) - Allowing Schools To Hire Chaplains (A) - This bill authorizes school districts, charter schools, and innovation zone schools to employ chaplains, or engage volunteer chaplains, to provide support, services, and programs for students. The bill provides that such chaplains are not required to have a license, endorsement, certification, authorization, or statement of recognition issued by the Board of Educational Examiners.
Amended and Approved by the House 57-39. On Senate debate calendar

HF 385 (formerly HF 124) - Discharge Plans For Those Involuntarily Committed (M) - The bill requires that, prior to the discharge of a person that was committed for a substance use disorder or hospitalized for inpatient care for a serious mental impairment, that the facility treating the person refer the person to an administrative services organization for evaluation, case management, and post-discharge services; assess the person for suicide risk; provide the person with a 30-day supply of all medications prescribed for the person before or during the person's treatment; provide the person or the person's legal representative with a discharge report; and notify certain persons listed in the bill.
Approved by the House 89-0. On Senate debate calendar

HSB 342 - Health and Human Services Appropriations (M) - Included in this spending bill are provisions which require a facility or a hospital treating an involuntarily committed person to perform certain actions prior to the

discharge of the person, and the referred administrative services organization to coordinate the discharged person's care and provide quarterly reports to HHS.
The bill also contains language to allow a physician assistant or an advanced registered nurse practitioner to testify in an involuntary commitment hearing for a substance abuse disorder or a serious mental impairment.
Approved by subcommittee

HSB 337 - Education Appropriations (M) - Included in this budget bill is a continuation of $3.183 million in funding for the Children's Mental Health-School Based Training and Support program.
Approved by subcommittee

Approved by the Senate and House:

SF 538 - Threat Assessment Teams (M) - The bill allows covered entities that provide services to students enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12 who are experiencing or at risk of an emotional disturbance or mental illness, or who pose an articulable and significant threat to the health and safety of any person, to share records or information that are reasonably necessary to ensure access to appropriate services for such students, or to ensure the safety of such students or others, with any other such covered entity. The bill authorizes all such covered entities to communicate, collaborate, and coordinate efforts to best serve students.
The bill defines "covered entity" to include nonpublic schools, charter schools, innovation zone schools, the judicial branch, a criminal or juvenile justice agency, political subdivisions, state agencies, and any service or support provider that contracts with such persons.
The bill authorizes school districts, accredited nonpublic schools, charter schools, and innovation zone schools to establish a multidisciplinary threat assessment team. The multidisciplinary threat assessment team is required to coordinate resources and assess and intervene when a student enrolled in the school exhibits behavior that may pose a threat to the safety of the school, school employees, or other students enrolled in the school.
Approved by the Senate 48-0. Approved by the House 91-0

SF 277 (formerly SSB 1077) - Truancy Law Update (M) - This bill modifies provisions related to compulsory education, truancy, and chronic absenteeism. The bill requires the Department of Education to develop, in consultation with the Iowa County Attorneys Association, a model policy that county attorneys may reference when determining whether and to what extent to enforce the provisions of Code chapter 299 on compulsory education. The bill also requires the Department to distribute the model policy to county attorneys, school districts, and accredited nonpublic schools.
The bill adds undergoing military entrance processing, engaging in military service, traveling to attend a funeral, and traveling to attend a wedding to the list of specified activities that are not included when determining whether a child of compulsory attendance age is deemed to be a truant.
Finally, current law provides that if a child is absent from school for greater than or equal to 15 percent of the days or hours in the grading period, a school official is required to attempt to find the cause for the child's absences and initiate and participate in a school engagement meeting. The bill provides that a school official is only required to initiate and participate in a school engagement meeting if the school official determines that the child's absences are negatively affecting the child's academic progress.
Approved by the Senate 47-0. Approved by the House 93-0

Approved by the House and Senate:

HF 865 - Student Bullying (M) - This bill modifies provisions related to the harassment or bullying of students enrolled in school districts or accredited nonpublic schools.
Approved by the House 64-33. Approved by the Senate 32-16

HF 330 (formerly HF 5) - Autism Spectrum Coverage (F) - This bill relates to insurance coverage for covered individuals for the treatment of autism spectrum disorder. The bill also changes the definition of autism under current law to align with the American Psychiatric Association's diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders.
Approved by the House 92-0. Approved by the Senate 45-0

Signed into law by the Governor:

HF 782 (formerly HSB 106) - Cell Phones in Schools (M) - Commencing with the school year beginning July 1, 2025, the bill requires school districts, charter schools, and innovation zone schools to adopt policies regarding student use of personal electronic devices during school hours. The bill establishes what the policies are to include. The bill requires the director of the Department of Education to develop and distribute to schools model policies that, if adopted, would satisfy the school's responsibilities under these provisions. However, schools may adopt policies that are more stringent than these model policies. The bill defines "personal electronic device" to include electronic communication equipment, mobile phones, smart phones, video game devices, and portable media players. These provisions take effect upon enactment.
Approved by the House 88-9. Amended and approved by the Senate 49-0. Approved by the House 92-4. Signed into law.