



**NJPSA Testimony**  
**On**  
**Suicide Prevention Training Requirements (A-313 (Singleton / Lampitt / Quijano))**  
**Before the**  
**Assembly Education Committee**  
**June 20, 2016**

Families, schools, fellow students and communities all lose when a student is lost through the tragedy of youth suicide. Fortunately, New Jersey school districts, principals, teachers and state government have taken strong actions to address the issue of youth suicide in our state. It is why NJPSA is proud of the steps this Legislature, the Administration and our schools have made to address suicide risk in our schools. It is also why we are happy to see today's legislation dovetail around that goal. As such, we are happy to support A-313 (Singleton / Lampitt / Quijano).

**Background**

Historically, the Legislature has affirmatively occupied the field in the area of youth suicide by enacting several statutes that set forth a comprehensive approach to this issue (*N.J.S.A. 30:9A-29 et seq.* and *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-111 et seq.*). Since 2011, the Division of Children and Families, in collaboration with the Departments of Education, Human Services and advocacy groups has implemented a Statewide Youth Suicide Prevention Plan which contains detailed goals including the establishment of in-state suicide prevention hotlines, grants, service networks, training of key gatekeepers such as school staff and reporting requirements.

In addition, the Legislature has established specific training requirements for all teaching staff members in suicide prevention and the detection of warning signs, including a focus on high risk students and the interplay between harassment intimidation and bullying and suicide. See *N.J.S.A. 18A:6-111* and *18A:37-17b*. Principals, supervisors and teachers receive this training as part of their required professional development requirements. These efforts are showing results as New Jersey has now ranked as one of the four lowest states for suicide rates in the country for all age groups. See *New Jersey Youth Suicide Prevention Plan, 2011-14, NJ Department of Children and Families*.

**Yet any single case of youth suicide is one too many.**

For this reason, NJPSA has strongly supported and our members have implemented the multiple, existing training requirements addressing suicide prevention, HIB, and the recognition of student mental health issues in our schools.

**The Bill Before You**

It is why we are happy to see this legislation which seeks to develop and release free of charge, training programs that will help identify, prevent, create awareness and enhance responsiveness in our schools. Ensuring school staff have the best quality training is an integral goal. But similarly, ensuring staff have access to information on how to respond or where to seek assistance is critical. The quick educational fact sheet envisioned under today's bill fulfills that need – ensuring ALL school personnel have information on suicide prevention, awareness, and response requirement. Knowing how to act and where to report a potentially life threatening situation is critical to our student's welfare and safety.

We thank the sponsors and fellow stakeholders for working to ensure the legislation before you addresses the needs that schools have in meeting the needs our students have as it relates to suicide prevention. We look forward to working with the sponsors in moving this legislation forward and to ensuring that school leaders and other educators know and benefit from the training and resources made available under the bill.