

Department of Planning and Budget 2023 Fiscal Impact Statement

1. **Bill Number:** SB818

House of Origin Introduced Substitute Engrossed

Second House In Committee Substitute Enrolled

2. **Patron:** Spruill

3. **Committee:** Education and Health

4. **Title:** Public elementary and secondary schools; programs of instruction; mental health education.

5. **Summary:** Requires each public elementary, middle, and high school to provide at each grade level, in addition to health instruction, an additional age-appropriate course of instruction on mental health. The bill directs the Board of Education to develop mental health curriculum guidelines for an age-appropriate, sequential mental health curriculum for each grade level and requires such curriculum guidelines to include instruction on (i) understanding general themes of mental health and wellness, (ii) recognizing symptoms of common mental health challenges, (iii) promoting mental health wellness, (iv) seeking assistance for mental health concerns and challenges, (v) promoting awareness of the prevalence of mental health challenges and the importance of overcoming common mental health stigmas, (vi) understanding the importance of mental health to a student's physical, academic, and overall well-being, and (vii) understanding age-appropriate instruction at such grade levels as the Board deems appropriate on the connection between mental health and substance use disorders. The bill permits the Board to consult with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and other mental health experts in developing such curriculum guidelines and requires the Board to submit such guidelines to the State Board of Health for approval. The bill requires the Board to review and update by the beginning of the 2024–2025 school year the health Standards of Learning for each grade level to include such instruction on the mental health curriculum guidelines.

6. **Budget Amendment Necessary:** Yes, Item 129.

7. **Fiscal Impact Estimates:** Preliminary, see Item 8.

8. **Fiscal Implications:** This bill would require the Department of Education (DOE) to develop new curriculum for mental health for all grade levels, which would require contracted assistance. The bill requires the new curriculum to be implemented at the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year; however, based on typical timelines for developing, reviewing, and approving new curriculum, DOE estimates it would take approximately two years to complete this work starting in fiscal year 2024. To support this work, DOE estimates a cost of \$325,000 in additional state funds throughout fiscal years 2024 and 2025.

DOE would also require additional funding to develop materials that align with the curriculum to be used by school divisions in classrooms. Based on similar requirements, assuming a cost of \$50,000 per division, DOE estimates a total one-time cost of \$6,500,000 in fiscal year 2024.

DOE reviews all Standards of Learning (SOLs) on a schedule; if DOE was required to review the health education SOLs out of order, additional work will be required. DOE would need to engage consultants, specialists, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. Based on recent costs for similar work completed along schedule, DOE also estimates a one-time cost of \$280,000 in fiscal year 2024 to revise the health education SOL.

In total, DOE estimates an additional one-time state general fund cost of \$7.1 million in fiscal year 2024 to complete the work required by this bill during fiscal years 2024 and 2025.

Because this language is permissive, the cost to the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services is indeterminate and dependent on the level of input and collaboration required. DBHDS does not currently have any staff dedicated to these duties. If DOE chooses to rely on DBHDS for these purposes, DBHDS would need a part-time employee to perform the consultation and research duties that would be required. The cost of the part-time employee and associated travel, equipment, and support costs is \$50,730 general fund. It is unclear if this would be a temporary position or if there would be a need for ongoing consultation with DOE. If this is a one-time expense, it can likely be absorbed in existing resources, however if there are ongoing duties, additional funding would be needed.

There is no anticipated state fiscal impact to the State Board of Health to approve the guidelines.

9. Specific Agency or Political Subdivisions Affected: Board of Education, Department of Education, local school divisions, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, State Board of Health

10. Technical Amendment Necessary: No

11. Other Comments: This bill is similar to HB2388.