

## SUICIDE PREVENTION COMMISSION

Phone: (517) 373-8080  
<http://www.house.mi.gov/hfa>

**House Bill 6252 (H-2) as reported from committee**

**Sponsor: Rep. Jim Runestad**

**First Committee: Health Policy**

**Second Committee: Judiciary**

**Complete to 12-12-18**

Analysis available at  
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

### SUMMARY:

House Bill 6252 would create a Suicide Prevention Commission to work with state departments and nonprofit organizations on researching causes and underlying factors of suicide, and to prepare a report for the legislature with recommendations for reducing risk factors with yearly updates thereafter, and would sunset the Commission at the end of 2026.

The bill would create the Suicide Prevention Commission within the Legislative Council. The Legislative Council would be required to furnish clerking services to the Commission. The Commission would be required to do all of the following:

- Work with state departments and agencies and nonprofit organizations on researching causes and possible underlying factors of suicide in the state. The study would have to focus on the demographics with the highest suicide rates in the state in the decade immediately preceding the bill's effective date, as well as those with the highest growth in suicide rates during that time period.
- Prepare and present a preliminary report to the legislature by January 1, 2020. The report would have to include the possible causes for the increase in suicide rates and recommendations for reducing risk factors among the demographics studied and other information the Commission considers relevant.
- By June 1, 2021, and each year thereafter, prepare and present to the legislature an updated version of the report.
- Annually review and update recommendations made under the act and monitor the implementation of the Commission's recommendations, if any were implemented.
- Provide recommendations for a process by which continued state coordination on suicide prevention data collection and a coordinated state approach regarding suicide prevention could continue after the act expires.

The Commission could establish subcommittees consisting of individuals who are not members of the Commission, including experts in matters of interest to the Commission. The Commission could also research policy recommendations from relevant sources and policy initiatives from other states in order to make recommendations to the governor and to the chairpersons of the House and Senate standing committees on health policy and on the judiciary on initiatives to reduce suicide rates among the demographics studied.

### **Commission membership and administration**

The bill would create a 25-member Suicide Prevention Commission. Appointments to the Commission would be shared by the governor, the directors of the Departments of State

Police and Health and Human Services, the Speaker of the House, and the Senate Majority Leader and would be made from lists of nominees submitted by designated agencies and organizations. The number of members each entity would appoint, and the expertise or demographic the appointee would represent, are specified in the bill. As a whole, appointees would represent suicide prevention researchers, health insurers, law enforcement, mental health and physical health professionals, schools, faith-based organizations, suicide crisis hotlines or suicide prevention services programs, survivors of suicide attempts, and those who lost someone to suicide. Names submitted for appointment would also include individuals having an expertise in drug addiction, suicide prevention, and workplace stress and suicide prevention. Appointments would have to be made within 90 days of the bill's effective date. Further, the Michigan Veteran's Facility Ombudsman, or his or her designee, would also serve as a member of the Commission.

Members would serve two-year terms, and the bill provides for the filling of vacancies and removal of members for such things as incompetence and dereliction of duty. The Commission would elect a chairperson and officers at the first meeting, and would meet quarterly thereafter (or more frequently at the call of the chair or if requested by at least five members). A majority of the members would constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at a meeting, and a majority of the members present and serving would be required for official action. All business must be conducted at a public meeting held in compliance with the Open Meetings Act. Writings prepared, owned, used, in the possession of, or retained by the Commission in the performance of an official function would be subject to the Freedom of Information Act. Further, Commission members would serve without compensation but could be reimbursed for actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of official duties as members of the Commission.

The bill would take effect 90 days after being enacted and would sunset (no longer apply) as of December 31, 2026.

## **BRIEF DISCUSSION:**

Suicide rates have been rising in Michigan for several years, with a 32.9% increase from 1999 to 2016, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Suicide now ranks as the 10th leading cause of death in the state, with the majority of deaths among white males. There are many factors underlying a person's decision to take his or her own life, with relationship problems, a recent past or upcoming crisis, substance abuse disorder, and physical health issues a factor in many suicides. Most do not involve mental illness, though for some that may be a contributing factor. Some feel that part of suicide prevention requires knowing the demographics and geography of suicide in Michigan and focusing the collective knowledge of the many stakeholders in the state who, by the nature of their job or industry, are impacted by and/or provide services to those at risk and those who lost loved ones to suicide.

House Bill 6252 would address the issue by creating a 25-member commission and tasking it with studying what is happening in Michigan in a comprehensive manner and making recommendations for how the state's suicide rate could be reduced. After recommendations

are made and before the Commission's enabling statute expires, the Commission would also monitor implementation of its recommendations and update its report. Importantly, the bill would bring together a wide range of experts—from health providers and insurers, to law enforcement, to people in education and university research, to those directly impacted by a suicide attempt or the loss of a loved one to suicide. By working together, the expertise and knowledge Commission members can bring to the table could be valuable in seeking workable and effective preventive strategies.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

House Bill 6252 would have indeterminate, but likely marginal, cost implications for the Legislative Council. The bill requires the Legislative Council to provide clerking services to the Suicide Prevention Commission, which is tasked with the responsibility of working with other entities; studying factors of suicide in Michigan; reporting and making recommendations to the Legislature; and advising, reviewing, updating, and monitoring implementation of the recommendations. Any costs the Legislative Council incurred would be dependent on the activity level of the Commission, which is required to meet at least quarterly. Commission members could be reimbursed for their actual and necessary expenses. This estimate does not include costs to implement recommendations of the Commission. Any additional funds required for the operation of the Commission would be subject to legislative appropriation.

DHHS currently supports a youth suicide prevention program in Michigan focused on 10- to 24-year-olds, which is funded by a \$750,000 annual federal grant.

#### **POSITIONS:**

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan indicated support for the bill. (12-5-18)

Michigan Psychiatric Society of Michigan indicated support for the bill. (12-5-18)

Legislative Analyst: Susan Stutzky  
Fiscal Analyst: Ben Gielczyk

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.