



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Bill to Increase Suicide Prevention Education Signed Into Law

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- [Mental Health](#)



State Senator Patty Ritchie’s bill ([S.5860A](#)) to provide New York State Universities, community colleges and city universities with educational materials on depression and suicide prevention has been signed into law.

“Nobody is immune to depression and for many battling the disease, suicide is becoming a path far too often traveled that leaves a wake of long-lasting, devastating effects on friends, family members and communities,” said Senator Ritchie. “By connecting people with the information and help they need—especially students who are at college and away from home for the first time—we will help save lives and let those in need know they are not alone.”

This bipartisan law, which was sponsored in the Assembly by Assemblyman Felix Ortiz, directs the Office of Mental Health (OMH) to develop educational materials regarding suicide prevention for educators. In addition, it also directs OMH to work with the Department of Education to distribute the materials so educators can reach more students potentially battling depression.

The idea for the measure was brought to Senator Ritchie’s attention by government students from the Phoenix Central School District and their teacher, Carol Blackburn.

Recent data shows that from the year 1999 through 2014, suicide rates for both males and females—of all ages—have increased by 24 percent, with the biggest increases coming after 2006.

In addition, because suicide has such a tremendous impact on peers, faculty and staff at colleges and universities, this new law also addresses the need for a postvention plan in partnership with a behavioral health provider in the community to support family members, friends, professionals and peers in the wake of a loved one's suicide.

To access the website for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, [click here](#).