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# State senator: Teen suicide bill needed, but expensive

**'WE NEED** a reliable service.' **Page 13-A.**



**BY DAVID BEARD**

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CHARLESTON — Senate Education Chairman Robert Plymale, D-Wayne, wants to see a teen suicide prevention bill move forward, but he is worried about the possible costs.

The committee heard testimony Thursday on HB 2889, the Jason Flatt Act of 2011, sponsored by Delegate Charlene Marshall, D-Monongalia.

The bill calls for any school personnel having direct contact with students to receive training on warning signs and resources to assist in teen suicide prevention.

A fiscal note attached to the bill by the Center for Professional Development (CPD), which would be responsible for carrying it out, puts the price tag at \$149,000 for a new staff member, curriculum development, a mental health consultant and training costs.

“Do you have that in your budget to handle it?” Plymale asked Secretary of Education and the Arts Kay Goodwin. Her department oversees the CPD.

technology.”

Marshall told the committee that Tennessee-based nonprofit The Jason Foundation will supply the materials for free — offerings that qualify for two hours of continuing education credit for educators. She said foundation President and CEO Clark Flatt will come to West Virginia to speak to any committee or group that wants to hear from him. Flatt is the father of Jason Flatt, who committed suicide in 1997.

Flatt asked Goodwin to take another look at the resources and the numbers and come back Tuesday, when the bill will be back on the agenda for a vote.

“I think it’s important we do something about this,” Plymale said. The vice chair [Sen. Erik Wells] and I see the need.”

The Flatt Foundation cites U.S. Department of Health figures that in 2000, more than 1 million youths ages 12-17 attempted suicide — 4,200 attempts each day in our nation among that age group. And every week, more than 100 young peo-

Goodwin said no, but there may be other possibilities. She has recently become familiar with the issue, so she has talked to Marshall and done some research.

“There is substantial information online,” she said. “We’re in the age of

ple kill themselves.

Local delegates Mike Caputo, D-Marion; and Barbara Evans Fleischauer and Tony Barill, both D-Monongalia, are among the bill’s sponsors. If it passes the education committee, it will go to the Senate Finance Committee.