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N.J. lawmakers vote to create training program to prevent cop suicides

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New Jersey lawmakers approved a bill Monday establishing a training program to prevent cop suicides.

The proposal (A1028) would also require police departments to report suicides.

State Senators approved it without a single “no” vote, 39-0, after the state Assembly passed it in December, 77-0.

The bill now heads to Gov. Phil Murphy, who must sign or veto it by Jan. 21.

The proposed training program, which would be available to every cop in the state, would flag “causes, behaviors, warning signs, and risk factors.” Officers would have to take the training every five years.

Information would also be collected about officer suicides. New Jersey currently doesn’t track how often they happen. Under the bill, departments would notify the state attorney general’s office, and include the officer’s race, gender, seniority and veteran status, among other information, although the name would be omitted.

That data would be public.

Officials currently rely on outside groups to tally deaths. The Massachusetts-based Blue H.E.L.P reported 37 law enforcement suicides in New Jersey from the beginning of 2016 through June 30 of last year, although the nonprofit said that number may be an undercount.

Even as it stands, more officers died by suicide than in the line of duty over a similar period.

The cost of creating and implementing these new programs would be “marginal,” according to a fiscal report.

If signed, the proposal would take effect later this year.

The legislation dovetails with another statewide program, announced in October, that’s training some cops to be “Resiliency Officers” who will help other cops in crisis.