

---

April 13, 2021 | 04:04pm

## Maria's Law clears full Senate; measure adds mental health instruction to health education curriculum

**OKLAHOMA CITY** –The full Senate has given approval to House Bill 1568, Maria's Law, to help Oklahoma students better understand mental health issues and how they can impact their overall well-being. Sen. John Haste, R-Broken Arrow, and Rep. Jeff Boatman, R-Tulsa, are principal authors of the legislation, which was approved unanimously by the Senate on Tuesday.

"We know childhood trauma and other issues, including the emotional and psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, can affect children and teens physically and mentally, and without help, it can adversely impact the rest of their lives," Haste said. "This bill is an effort to raise awareness and help reduce the stigma of mental health care. I really appreciated working with Representative Boatman on this important issue and thank all our members for their support."

Under HB 1568, beginning with the 2022-23 school year, the State Board of Education would require all schools to include instruction in mental health as part of any health education curriculum, with an emphasis on the interrelation of physical and mental well-being. It also directs the Board, in consultation with the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, to revise the Oklahoma Academic Standards for Health and Physical Education to include a focus on mental health and develop a list of age-appropriate resources for students in grades K-12. It also allows school districts to enter into agreements with nonprofits or other community partners to assist in providing mental health education if those entities or partners are approved by the Department of Education and the Department of Mental Health.

"The stigma surrounding mental health unfortunately delays or prevents people from pursuing treatment. It is my sincerest hope that House Bill 1568 will help educate our young students on how mental health issues impact their overall well-being and encourage them to seek treatment when necessary," Boatman said. "I'd like to thank Senator Haste for his diligent work to pass the bill through the Senate. He is a great partner and a champion of mental health in our state, and it's been an honor to work on this legislation with him."

The bill now returns to the House for consideration of Senate amendments.

### Contact info

For more information, contact:

Sen. John Haste at 405-521-5602 or email [John.Haste@oksenate.gov](mailto:John.Haste@oksenate.gov)

Rep. Jeff Boatman at 405- 557-7341 or email [Jeff.Boatman@okhouse.gov](mailto:Jeff.Boatman@okhouse.gov)