

February 3, 2025

The Honorable Zachary Nunn
1410 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chris Pappas
452 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Nunn and Representative Pappas:

On behalf of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG), a coalition of national organizations representing individuals and families experiencing mental health and substance use challenges, mental health and substance use treatment providers, advocates, and other stakeholders committed to strengthening access to high-quality mental and substance use disorder (SUD) care, we write in strong support for the *Prevent Youth Suicide Act* (H.R. 5482).

In 2023, suicide was the second leading cause of death among ages 10-14 and third for ages 15-19.ⁱ For youth ages 10-17, nearly 60% who reported a major depressive episode in the past year did not receive treatment.ⁱⁱ Despite growing awareness of the importance of youth mental health, too many young people lack consistent access to trained professionals, effective prevention programs, and coordinated support following a crisis. The *Prevent Youth Suicide Act* will help close these gaps by ensuring schools are better prepared to identify, support, and connect students in distress to appropriate care. Students are the eyes and ears of their schools and, by equipping them with training to identify signs of suicide in their peers and how to get help, more young lives can be saved. By advancing trauma-informed and evidence-based practices, this legislation strengthens the safety net for youth and helps prevent tragedies before they occur.

When educators, counselors, and school staff are equipped to recognize early warning signs of suicide, and respond effectively, they are better able to support students in need. Research shows that access to school-based mental health services is associated with improved academic performance, behavior, and overall well-being. Comprehensive programs also help strengthen school safety and resilience, serving as a critical line of defense against youth suicide.

The Mental Health Liaison Group is proud to endorse the *Prevent Youth Suicide Act*. We are grateful for your commitment to ensuring schools have the tools to protect and promote student well-being. The MHLG looks forward to working with you and your colleagues to advance this vital legislation.

Sincerely,

Active Minds
American Academy of Nursing
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Psychoanalytic Association
American Psychological Association Services

Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare (AABH)
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)
Children's Hospital Association
Clinical Social Work Association
Crisis Text Line
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health & Social Justice
Inseparable
International OCD Foundation
International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of School Psychologists
National Eating Disorders Association
National League for Nursing
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
Sandy Hook Promise
School Social Work Association of America
SMART Recovery
The American Counseling Association
The Jed Foundation
The National Federation of Families
The Trevor Project
Vibrant Emotional Health

ⁱ National Vital Statistics System, Mortality 2018-2022 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released in 2024. Data are from the Multiple Cause of Death Files, 2018-2022, as compiled from data provided by the 57 vital statistics jurisdictions through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program. <http://wonder.cdc.gov/mcd-icd10-expanded.html>.

ⁱⁱ National Association of School Psychologists. (2021). *Comprehensive School-Based Mental and Behavioral Health Services and School Psychologists* <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/mental-and-behavioral-health/additional-resources/comprehensive-school-based-mental-and-behavioral-health-services-and-school-psychologists>.

ⁱⁱⁱ American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, American School Counselor Association, National Association of School Psychologists & The Trevor Project (2019). *Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention: Model Language, Commentary, and Resources (2nd ed.)*. New York: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. <https://afsp.org/model-school-policy-on-suicide-prevention/>