

August 2, 2018

The Honorable Tina Smith  
United States Senate  
309 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Smith:

The Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG) – a coalition of national organizations representing consumers, family members, mental health and addiction providers, advocates, payers and other stakeholders committed to strengthening Americans' access to mental health and addiction care - is pleased to support the Mental Health Services for Students Act of 2018, S. 3337.

We applaud your vision of making comprehensive school-based mental health services and supports for students available in communities across America. As you know, supporting mental and behavioral health needs early in life is critical to academic, health, and economic success, and therefore, providing an array of evidence-based services through schools is imperative. The Mental Health Services for Students Act would advance a public health approach to mental health services both in schools and in the community, and has the potential to improve the quality of life for countless children while saving an estimated \$247 billion annually by investing in early intervention programs.

The legislation builds on the highly-effective Safe Schools/Healthy Students program, which strengthens partnerships between local education agencies and community programs including, but not limited to, local primary health, juvenile justice and child welfare entities. It provides funding to place on-site licensed mental health professionals in schools across the country to provide behavioral health services for students and their families at no charge, and it supports community mental health systems to better coordinate with school-based providers, to increase school attendance and improve academic outcomes.

The legislation would also provide assistance to communities in order to create comprehensive, evidence-based, developmentally, linguistically, and culturally appropriate, trauma-informed services that incorporate strategies of positive behavioral interventions and supports in academic settings.

According to the 2009 Institute of Medicine report on mental health prevention and promotion, 50 percent of individuals with a diagnosable mental health disorder will receive a diagnosis by age 14, 75 percent by age of 24, and most will begin experiencing symptoms years before that. And because we know mental health issues are preventable and treatable when children, youth and their families can obtain appropriate and timely services and support, the Mental Health Services for Students Act better connects health and education systems.

The MHLG is confident the legislation will help improve children's resilience and ability to succeed in life. We appreciate your leadership and look forward to working with you and your colleagues to pass this important bill.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Strong Families and Communities  
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Art Therapy Association  
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy  
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work  
American Association on Health and Disability  
American Dance Therapy Association  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
American Group Psychotherapy Association  
American Mental Health Counselors Association  
American Occupational Therapy Association  
American Orthopsychiatric Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychological Association  
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare  
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness  
Anxiety and Depression Association of America  
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law  
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder  
Cities Thrive Coalition  
Clinical Social Work Association  
Council on Social Work Education  
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance  
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy and Action  
EMDR International Association  
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice  
Mental Health America  
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health  
National Association for Rural Mental Health  
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors  
National Association of School Psychologists  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health  
National Council for Behavioral Health  
National Disability Rights Network  
National Eating Disorders Coalition  
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health  
National League for Nursing  
Sandy Hook Promise  
Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America  
School-Based Health Alliance (SBHA) \*  
School Social Work Association of America  
The Kennedy Forum  
The Trevor Project

\*not a MHLG member