

Creating Access and Resources in Education for Student Mental Health Act”
or the
“CARE for Student Mental Health Act”
Senators Cornyn, Sinema, Tillis, Tester, Hassan

America is in the midst of a youth mental health crisis, yet the vast majority of school districts have limited or no access to school based mental health providers (e.g. school psychologists, school counselors, school social workers) who are critical to supporting student wellness and improving overall school safety. One in five children have a diagnosable mental or behavioral health disorder and, by 7th grade, approximately 40% of students will experience symptoms of depression and/or anxiety. Due in part to workforce shortages, most students do not receive the mental health care they require; of those that do, the vast majority receive such services at school.

When Congress passed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) in response to the tragedy in Uvalde, Texas, they provided unprecedented investments to help states and districts improve student mental health and school safety, including \$1 billion, collectively, for the Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant (MHSP) and the School Based Mental Health Services Program (SBMH) to address the workforce shortages of school psychologists, school counselors, school social workers, and other school based mental health services providers and enable LEAs to hire staff to provide comprehensive school based mental health services.

Despite the enormous need for school-based mental health professionals across the United States for this funding, fewer than 3% of eligible entities applied for these grants. Many district administrators had no idea this money was even available while other districts were deterred by the application process and the lack of technical assistance provided by the U.S. Department of Education on how to complete the various components of the application.

The **CARE for Student Mental Health Act** will improve upon the two Department of Education mental health programs funded in BSCA. This broadens access to competitive mental health grants distributed by the U.S. Department of Education to ensure high-need, low-capacity districts and students in geographically isolated areas can benefit. This bill targets funding to high-needs districts and alters how the Department alerts districts to mental health funding opportunities. This bill:

- Clarifies the distinction, purpose, and allowable activities of each grant to help eligible entities quickly determine which grant best meets their needs.
- Requires the Department to improve notification and technical assistance for potential grantees which will enable more districts with limited administrative capacity to apply and compete for these federal grants.
- Authorizes and streamlines the Strengthening the Pipeline of School-Based Mental Health Services Providers grant (formerly named MHSP) which supports partnerships between Institutions of Higher Education and LEAs to increase the number of properly trained school based mental health service professionals.
- Authorizes the School Based Mental Health Services Program (SBMH) that assists high need LEAs to recruit, hire, and retain school based mental health personnel for students to remain healthy, engaged, and safe at school.

Endorsing Organizations: AASA, The School Superintendents Association, National Association of School Psychologists, American Atheists, American Federation of School Administrators, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, American Music Therapy Association, American Occupational Therapy Association, American Psychological Association, American School Health Association, Association of Educational Service Agencies, Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO), CASEL, Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Children and Screens: Institute of Digital Media and Child Development, Committee for Children, Common Sense Media, Council for Exceptional Children, Council of Administrators of Special Education, Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy, & Action, EDGE Consulting Partners, First Focus, GLSEN, Healthy Schools Campaign, Inseparable, MENTOR, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS), National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Association of School Nurses, National Association of State Boards of Education, National Black Justice Coalition, National Center for Learning Disabilities, National Federation of Families, National PTA, National Rural Education Association, National Rural Education Association Coalition, National School Boards Association, Sandy Hook Promise, School Social Work Association of America, School-Based Health Alliance, SchoolHouse Connection, The Education Trust, The Carter Center, The Kennedy Forum, Young Women’s Project