

MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS ACT (S. 1588/H.R.1211) CONNECTING STUDENTS TO MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER SERVICES IN SCHOOLS



In 2015, Senator Al Franken (D-MN) and Representatives Grace Napolitano (D-CA), Chris Gibson (R-NY) and Paul Tonko (D-NY) re-introduced the Mental Health in Schools Act (S. 1588/H.R. 1211) – legislation that builds on successful, evidence-based programs within the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). These youth-focused programs incorporate promising practices in education, justice, social services, and trauma-informed behavioral health care to help communities take action and help youth and adolescents in need.

The Mental Health in Schools Act builds on a highly-effective program known as the Safe Schools/Healthy Students program, which strengthens partnerships between local education and community programs including (but not limited to) local primary health, juvenile justice and child welfare entities, and provides funding to place on-site qualified mental health and substance use professionals in schools across the country to provide behavioral health services for students and their families at no charge.

The legislation would also provide assistance to communities to create comprehensive, evidence-based, age and culture appropriate, trauma-informed services that incorporate strategies of positive behavioral interventions and supports. Literature summarizing studies of school-wide positive behavioral supports (PBS) suggests that, on average, PBS schools see improvements in social climate and academic performance and experience 20- to 60-percent reductions in disciplinary incidents.

Similar legislation has been introduced in each of the last three Congresses.

REQUEST

PLEASE COSPONSOR
THE MENTAL HEALTH
IN SCHOOLS ACT
(S.1588/H.R.1211)

WHY DO WE NEED THE MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS ACT?

A KEY COMPONENT TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS IS SOUND MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER SERVICES FOR STUDENTS.

Education is an essential building block in the lives of children and adolescents. Positive academic and social experiences in school help children and adolescents gain the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to grow into independent and productive adults. Mental health and substance use disorder services are essential to learning and to the healthy social and emotional development of children. The Mental Health in Schools Act would expand the availability of comprehensive school-based mental health and substance use disorder services for students in communities across the U.S.

17 MILLION YOUTH HAVE HAD A DIAGNOSABLE MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER AND ONE IN FOUR HAVE SUBSTANCE USE CONDITIONS, BUT LESS THAN 35 PERCENT WILL RECEIVE TREATMENT.

Given the early onset of emotional, mental health and substance use disorders and their subsequent direct and indirect costs, investments in early intervention programs, especially those that better connect health and education systems, should be prioritized. Investing in treatment, prevention and intervention will not only save money, it will help save lives.

EXPANDING SUCCESSFUL, EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS IS SOUND PUBLIC POLICY. In our current fiscal climate, it is imperative that government resources be used judiciously to ensure high quality, valuable programs are funded and that results are visible for all to see. The Mental Health in Schools Act invests in and expands effective and cost-efficient programs within SAMHSA that have proven successful for children across the country. Investing in America’s children and families is investing in the future of our nation.



MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS ACT

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