



Eating Disorders Coalition Hosted Annual Advocacy Day

WASHINGTON, D.C (May 18, 2022)- Yesterday, 190 advocates from 34 states and the District of Columbia took part in the Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action (EDC) Virtual Advocacy Day. Advocates spent the day sharing their personal stories and urging their congressional leaders to support the Anna Westin Legacy Act ([H.R. 7249/S. 3686](#)) and the Kids Online Safety Act ([S.3663](#)), two critical pieces of legislation for the eating disorders community.

The Anna Westin Legacy Act ([H.R. 7249/S. 3686](#)) would reauthorize the Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders to continue training primary health professions on eating disorders screening, brief intervention, and referral to care (SBIRT). The legislation is led by Representatives Doris Matsui (D-CA), David McKinley (R-WV), Ted Deutch (D-FL) and Jeff Van Drew (R-NJ), and Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), and Thom Tillis (R-NC). Unfortunately, there has been a rise in eating disorders fueled by the COVID-19 pandemic. Emergency room eating disorder visits for teen girls and eating disorders caseloads at children’s hospitals have doubled.[\[1\]](#),[\[2\]](#) Meanwhile, only 6% of U.S. medical schools require eating disorders training to graduate.[\[3\]](#)

The Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders was founded in 2019 as a result of the passage of the 21st Century CURES Act ([P.L. 114-255](#)). Over 7,000 providers have been trained on eating disorders since its founding. The Anna Westin Legacy Act would expand the evidence based SBIRT protocol to the pediatric level and build adaptive modules for at-risk communities that experience under-identification, including racially diverse and tribal communities, rural communities, men and boys, military families, veterans, and LGBTQ populations. The EDC is encouraged by the movement of the Anna Westin Legacy Act and hope to see additional co-sponsors as a result of advocacy day efforts.

“We came together to advocate for the Anna Westin Legacy Act and once again I witnessed the transformative power of grassroots activists speaking their truth and believing that they are making a difference by helping to create a world where eating disorders are no longer misunderstood or dismissed as a behavior problem,” **said Kitty Westin, Director Emeritus of the EDC, and mother of Anna Westin.** “Countless people are let down by a medical

community that is not adequately trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of an eating disorder. Believing that you can make a difference, that your voice is important, is a powerful motivator for change. I have been advocating with the EDC for more than 20 years and every time I participate in an advocacy day, I am reminded of the power of individual voices coming together for a common cause.

This year, advocates stories are ensuring that, going forward, there is easy access to all the information a medical professional need to screen, intervene and refer for an eating disorder.”

The Kids Online Safety Act ([S. 3663](#)), led by Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and Marsha Blackburn (R-TN), would hold big tech accountable through audits and fines to protect users under 18 from social media harms. The legislation would provide parents and youth tools and safeguards to protect a young user’s experience online and allow scientists access to social media company data to conduct research in the public interest. Throughout yesterday’s meetings, advocates encouraged offices within the U.S. Senate to advance this legislation forward in the Senate Commerce Committee and urged offices within the U.S. House of Representatives to become original co-sponsors and introduce a companion bill by the summer.

“From a young age, I had been exposed to the heavy societal pressures of being thin and losing weight through school bullying that was only exacerbated and strengthened from my early usage and access to social media and the toxic reminders they served to me as a youth growing up,” **said Kelsey Wu, Founder of For You and an eating disorder youth advocate.** “I finally shared my experiences with my parents and was able to receive help. Many people are not able to ever break out of the belief that they are not enough, that they are too big, or too short, or too ugly; and a large part of this is due to the lack of regulation on big tech companies and the algorithms that they make which harm our youth today. This is why it is vital that our leaders of our nation co-sponsor the Kids Online Safety Act so those at risk for eating disorders have access to the care and understanding they deserve.”

“The EDC is privileged to work alongside amazing individuals who are passionate about sharing their story,” **said EDC Board President, Chase Bannister, MDIV, MSW, LCSW, CEDS.** “Our strong attendance and geographic diversity are great examples of our depth and impact as a community. We cannot do this work without our incredible advocates. Every individual voice truly makes a difference and makes our world a better place.”

The EDC is thankful for every person who participated in this year’s advocacy day. The EDC is fortunate to have a platform that gives individuals the opportunity to have their voices heard by Congress and stand up for those who have had an eating disorder or currently struggle with one. The EDC also extends gratitude to its membership organizations who supported virtual advocacy day through emails and social media.

The EDC is looking for individuals to participate in the legislative process all year long through the EDC Ambassador program. **Click the button below for to learn more and to sign up!**

[Become an EDC Ambassador](#)

The Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action (EDC) federal advocacy organization based in Washington, DC. The EDC advances the recognition of eating disorders as a public health priority throughout the United States. Additional resources can be found at eatingdisorderscoalition.org.

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[1] National Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders 2022.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Mahr F, Farahmand P, Bixler EO, Domen RE, Moser EM, Nadeem T, Levine RL, Halmi KA 2015.