



U.S. House of Representatives Passes Anna Westin Legacy Act

WASHINGTON, D.C. (June 22, 2022)- The Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action (EDC) celebrates the passage of the *Anna Westin Legacy Act* ([H.R.7249](#)) within the *Restoring Hope for Mental Health and Well-Being Act of 2022* ([H.R.7666](#)) in the U.S. House of Representatives. The EDC would like to thank Representatives Doris Matsui (D-CA-06), David McKinley (R-WV-01), Ted Deutch (D-FL-22), and Jefferson Van Drew (R-NJ-02) for leading the Anna Westin Legacy Act to passage. The EDC also thanks its member organizations and incredible advocates across the country. The EDC could not do this work without their voices!

The *Anna Westin Legacy Act* will reauthorize the Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders to continue training primary health care professionals on eating disorders screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment (SBIRT). The Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders was founded in 2018 by the Substance Use and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in implementation of the *Anna Westin Act*. Key provisions of the *Anna Westin Act* were passed within the 21st Century Cures Act ([P.L. 114-255](#)). The passage of these provisions marked the first time eating disorders legislation became federal law. The *Anna Westin Legacy Act* seeks to build on this success through the expansion of the SBIRT protocol to the pediatric level and the creation of adaptive modules for at-risk communities, including people of color, men and boys, military families, veterans, and LGBTQ+ communities. The bill will now advance to the U.S. Senate for further consideration.

“Today, I was proud to join the House in voting to pass the *Restoring Hope for Mental Health and Well-Being Act*,” **said Representative Doris Matsui (D-CA-06)**. “This comprehensive legislation includes an important bill that I co-lead—the *Anna Westin Legacy Act*—which would formally authorize the Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders to continue training health care professionals to screen, briefly intervene, and refer individuals to treatment for eating disorders. For the past five years, the Center has been a critical tool for better training and educating providers. The expert support provided by the Center is key to breaking down systemic barriers that have historically made it difficult for sufferers to get the effective professional help they need. The *Anna Westin Legacy Act* will continue this important work and keep Anna’s voice alive by helping all those suffering from eating disorders access the critical treatments they need to survive.”

“The *Anna Westin Legacy Act* will help the millions of Americans who suffer from eating disorders and ensure they will have access to services and quality care,” **said Representative David B. McKinley (R-WV-01)**. “It is important for health care professionals to have the training to screen for eating disorders

and refer individuals to dedicated treatment. This bill will help save lives, and we're excited for it to have passed the House as part of the mental health package.”

Eating disorders affect over 30 million Americans during their lifetime and have the second highest mortality rates of any mental illness, second only to opioid addiction.¹ Despite the high prevalence, many pediatric and adult primary care providers lack training in identifying eating disorder symptoms. Only 6% of medical schools in the United States require eating disorders training for a degree.² To fill this gap, the Center of Excellence has already trained over 7,000 providers since its 2019 founding.

“My daughter started showing signs of an eating disorder at the age of 12,” **said Jennifer Marroquin, EDC Ambassador from Lakeland, Florida.** “I contacted the pediatrician, but she said there wasn't much they could do for eating disorders. A few weeks later, my daughter's condition became so serious that the pediatrician had her admitted to a children's hospital more than an hour away. Our local providers did not know how to treat eating disorders. My daughter and others like her deserve medical care in their own community. We need doctors to become educated on eating disorders to understand the urgency for early intervention and to know when and where to refer patients for eating disorders treatment. The training that the Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders will now give at the pediatric level will hopefully enable families to get the support and care sooner than we did and spare them the agony of watching their child suffer.”

“I was proud to see the *Anna Westin Legacy Act* pass the House today, among a historic mental health legislative package,” **said Representative Ted Deutch (D-FL-22).** “Investments in mental health are investments in our families, our communities, our safety, and our future. This bill will preserve Anna Westin's legacy and ensure all those who are struggling with eating disorders are given the resources that they need to recover.”

“I am proud of the work that my colleagues and I have done to bring the *Anna Westin Legacy Act* to the House Floor for a vote,” **said Representative Jeff Van Drew (R-NJ-02).** “We are living in a time where addressing the mental health crisis is imperative, and this legislation is one step in the right direction. Healthcare providers across the nation must be equipped to address eating disorders properly and effectively so individuals receive the necessary treatment.”

“For the eating disorders community, the passage of the *Anna Westin Legacy Act* will catalyze increased prevention, identification and treatment for those struggling with eating disorders,” **said Chase Bannister, MDIV, MSW, LCSW, CEDS, President of EDC's Board of Directors.** “Prevention and early intervention are a significant part of ensuring that not one more person has to experience the consequences of this lethal and serious mental illness. The EDC is elated that the Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders is one step closer to expanding the SBIRT protocol to the pediatric level and underserved

¹ Chesney, E., Goodwin, G.M., & Fazel, S (2014). Risks of all-cause and suicide mortality in mental disorders: a meta-review. *World Psychiatry*, 13 (2), 153-160.

² Mahr F, Farahmand P, Bixler EO, Domen RE, Moser EM, Nadeem T, Levine RL, Halmi KA. A national survey of eating disorder training. *Int J Eat Disord*. 2015 May;48(4):443-5. doi: 10.1002/eat.22335. Epub 2014 Jul 22. PMID: 25047025.

communities. Further education and training on mental illness and eating disorders is needed now more than ever. The EDC implores the U.S. Senate to act swiftly and pass this critical legislation.”

The Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action (EDC) is a 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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