

Improving Mental Health and Wellness in Schools Act

Led by Reps. Kathy Manning (D-NC-06) & Vicky Hartzler (R-MO-04)

Youth Mental Health Needs



1 in 6 youth experience a mental health disorder each year¹

2.3 Million

The number of youth coping with severe major depression²



50%

The percentage of students who receive some type of mental health care at school³

Pandemic Worsened Youth Mental Health



COVID-19 has led to worsening youth mental health, including:

25%

Increase in pediatric emergency room admission for mental health conditions⁴

30%

Increase in adolescent eating disorder diagnoses year over year⁵

Nutrition & Mental Health



Food insecurity in childhood affects children's short-term health, development and learning, but is also associated with long-term health consequences⁶

Food insecure



Food secure

Food insecure households have over 5x higher rates of eating disorder pathology and dietary restraint^{7,8}

Food insecurity is associated with a:

257%

higher risk of anxiety⁹

253%

higher risk of depression¹⁰

The Issue:



Local School Wellness Policies focus only on educating and promoting physical health and nutrition education, missing the mental health component

Consequences of Physical Health Promotion Without Mental Health



Research demonstrates that a focus on appearance and weight can promote disordered eating behaviors and can lead to body dissatisfaction¹¹

Body dissatisfaction contributes to:¹²

- Risk factor for almost all eating disorders
- Direct cause of low self-esteem
- Anxiety, depression, isolation, and suicidal thoughts
- Substance use and abuse

Solution:

- Add mental health promotion and education requirements to existing guidelines for Local School Wellness Policies.
 - Studies have shown comprehensive school mental health programs help students academic achievement and build upon core social skills, leadership, self-awareness, and caring connections to adults in their school and communities.¹³
- Include SAMHSA to consult with the CDC in providing technical assistance for states and schools, including encouraging mental health promotion.
- Requires the Secretary to provide a study to Congress on the findings of the updated LSWPs.
- Provides \$5 million to assist schools to integrate mental health promotion into their policies.



BE REAL.



To cosponsor contact: Rep. Manning, Jayme Holliday (jayme.holliday@mail.house.gov) or Rep. Hartzler, Colleen Castle (colleen.castle@mail.house.gov)

Citations from Infographic:

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