Improving Mental Health and Wellness in Schools Act
Led by Sens. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Cynthia Lummis (R-WY)

Youth Mental Health Needs

1 in 6 youth experience a mental health disorder each year\(^1\)

2.3 Million

The number of youth coping with severe major depression\(^2\)

50%

The percentage of students who receive some type of mental health care at school\(^3\)

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 conditions\(^4\)

30%

Increase in adolescent eating disorder diagnoses year over year\(^5\)

Nutrition & Mental Health

Food insecurity in childhood affects children’s short-term health, development and learning, but is also associated with long-term health consequences\(^6\)

The number of youth coping with severe major depression\(^2\)

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

Food insecure is associated with a:

257% higher risk of anxiety\(^9\)

253% higher risk of depression\(^10\)

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 dissatisfaction\(^11\)

Body dissatisfaction contributes to:

- 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\(^13\)

- Requires policies are developed and implemented by a multidisciplinary team of school personnel.

- Include SAMHSA to consult with the CDC in providing technical assistance for states and schools, including encouraging mental health promotion.

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