NASP Urges Support for the Increasing Access to Mental Health in Schools Act

Bethesda, MD—Today, Senator Jon Tester (MT) and Congresswoman Judy Chu (CA) introduced companion versions of the Increasing Access to Mental Health in Schools Act. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) commends Senator Tester and Congresswoman Chu for their leadership in introducing this legislation to improve access to school mental health services for America’s children and youth.

“We have a growing mental health crisis among our young people, including the alarming rise in youth suicide rates, and schools play a critical role in meeting their needs,” said NASP President Lisa Kelly-Vance. Left unaddressed, mental health problems interfere with learning, behavior, social engagement, overall well-being, and sometimes physical safety. One in five students will experience a mental health problem that requires support, yet approximately 80% of them will not receive the necessary services. Of those who do receive services, the vast majority access them at school. Research shows that students are more likely to receive mental health services if they are offered at school—especially in low-income communities.

Unfortunately, we have a critical shortage of school psychologists and other school-employed mental health professionals that prevents many students from receiving the mental health supports they need to thrive and succeed in school, at home, and in life.

This legislation is a critical step toward addressing the shortage and improving access to services by providing grants to create community partnerships between local education agencies and universities. These partnerships will help train, recruit, and retain school psychologists, school social workers, and school counselors in high-need districts experiencing critical shortages. The legislation further directs the U.S. Department of Education to establish a loan forgiveness program for school mental health providers who serve in areas with significant need.

If enacted, NASP believes this comprehensive, multipronged legislation will make a remarkably positive, long-term impact on students, schools, and communities.

“We know that providing access to mental and behavioral health services in schools makes them safer and improves learning outcomes,” noted Kelly-Vance. “We thank Senator Tester and...
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Congresswoman Chu for their leadership in introducing this critical legislation, which will help at-risk communities train, recruit, and retain high-quality professionals to support our children and guide them on a path to success.”

NASP urges other Members of Congress to support this legislation in the immediate and long-term interest of our children and country. Senators interested in cosponsoring this bill should contact Katie Rubinger at katie_rubinger@tester.senate.gov and Representatives should contact David Silberberg david.silberberg@mail.house.gov.

For further information on how school psychologists work with teachers, administrators, families, and other providers to support students’ mental health and learning, visit www.nasponline.org.

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