

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

March 24, 2023

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro:

The COVID-19 pandemic has upended the lives of our nation's children and youth and added additional stressors that have significantly strained their mental health and wellbeing. Children and youth across the country continue to confront the traumatic challenges of this pandemic, including disruptions to their lives, fear and anxiety about the virus, and the tragic deaths of loved ones. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), mental health disorders are chronic conditions that, without proper diagnosis and treatment, can lead to problems for children at home and in school, interfering with their health and development.

We must provide the necessary funding and resources to reach children and youth early on in life. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, 20 percent of youth ages 13-18 live with a mental health condition, with 50 percent of all lifetime cases of mental illness beginning by age 14, and 75 percent beginning by age 24. In 2021, U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy issued a new Surgeon General's Advisory to highlight the urgent need to address our nation's worsening youth mental health crisis. The advisory noted that youth mental health challenges have been on the rise even prior to COVID-19, and from 2007 to 2018, the suicide rates among youth aged 10-24 increased by 57 percent.

The need for mental health and suicide prevention services only continues to grow. An October 2022 Kaiser Family Foundation/CNN Mental Health in America Survey found that 47 percent of parents stated the pandemic has had a negative impact on their children's mental health, and in February 2023, the CDC released its Youth Risk Behavioral Survey Data Summary & Trends Report: 2011-2021, which found that youth are experiencing increased levels of persistent sadness and hopelessness.

As you work to prepare the Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, we strongly encourage you to fund the following programs that address children and youth mental health:

1. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) [CDC]

Current Funding Level (FY23): \$9,000,000; Request (FY24): \$15,000,000

Purpose of program: As the nation's leading health protection agency, the CDC must prioritize the collection and reporting of data on ACEs. ACEs are potential traumatic events that occur in childhood ages 0-17 that can negatively affect future health, education, job opportunities, and earning potential. According to the CDC, examples of ACEs include experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect. Aspects of a child's environment, such as growing up in a household with instability or mental health problems, can also undermine their sense of safety and stability.

2. National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) [SAMHSA]

Current Funding Level (FY23): \$93,887,000; Request (FY24): \$150,000,000

Purpose of program: The NCTSN was established to improve behavioral health services and interventions for children and adolescents exposed to traumatic events. Funding is provided to a national network of more than 140 affiliated centers located in universities, hospitals, and community-based organizations, to develop and promote effective community practices for children and adolescents exposed to a wide array of traumatic events.

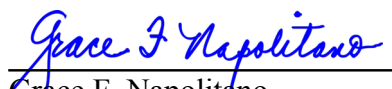
3. Project AWARE [SAMHSA]

Current Funding Level (FY23): \$140,001,000; Request (FY24): \$244,000,000

Purpose of program: Project AWARE grants are awarded to State Education Agencies to identify children and youth in need of mental health services, increase access to mental health treatment, and promote mental health literacy among teachers and school personnel.

We truly appreciate your continued commitment to mental health and respectfully request funding for these key programs in the FY24 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill.

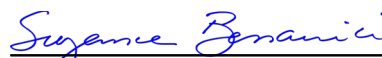
Sincerely,



Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Doris Matsui
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



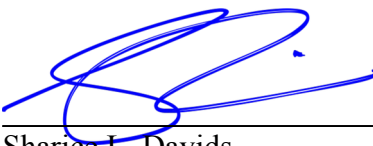
Andrea Salinas
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Emanuel Cleaver, II
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Angie Craig
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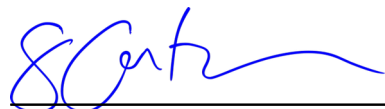
Katie Porter
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Shontel M. Brown
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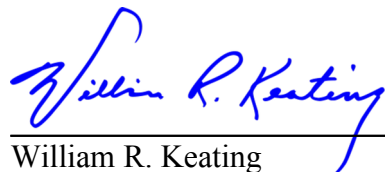
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Sean Casten
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Josh Gottheimer
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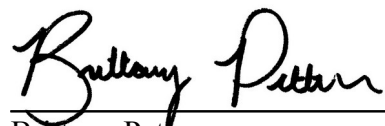
Rashida Tlaib
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Jimmy Panetta
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Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress



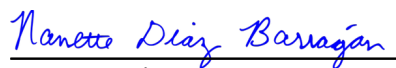
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Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



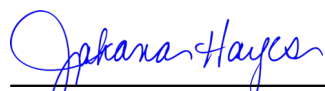
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Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



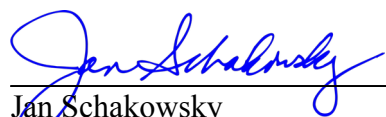
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