

October 1, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman, Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman, House Committee on Education and
the Workforce
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Robert Scott
Ranking Member, House Committee on
Education and the Workforce
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, Chairman Kline, and Ranking Member Scott:

As you proceed with discussions to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the undersigned organizations strongly urge you to include in the final conference package several provisions of the Every Child Achieves Act (S. 1177) which support school-based mental health.

Mental health support plays a critical role in improving student outcomes and allowing for the existence of a well-rounded educational environment. School counselors, social workers, and school psychologists address a range of pressing student needs each day—these can include dealing with the aftermath of traumatic events, bullying, helping with college and career advice, early identification and intervention, wellness promotion, family engagement, and pairing students with resources available in the community, among other issues.

Despite the benefits of these services, one in five American high schools does not have a school counselor¹ and many districts still report ratios of only one school psychologist to more than 2,000 students². Especially given the lack of school counselors, school psychologists, and social workers in many schools and districts, we believe that the Senate-approved provisions noted below deserve strong consideration for inclusion in the final conference package. Each of the following provisions has passed the Senate on a broad, bipartisan basis and the first four were passed unanimously by the Senate HELP Committee. As such, we urge you to include each provision in legislation to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act:

1. § 4301, authorizing the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program;

¹ U.S. Department of Education, OCR, Civil Rights Data Collection (2011-12)

² Charvat, Jeffrey L., Ph. D. *National Association of School Psychologists Member Surveys: Ratio of Students Per School Psychologist by State*

2. § 2103(b)(4)(K), allowing Local Education Agencies to use Title II funds to ensure that school personnel are able to identify and support children with trauma history and children at risk for mental illness;
3. § 1113(c)(2)(F)(ii)(III)(aa), allowing funds for school-wide programs in targeted assistance schools to be used for counseling, school based mental health programs, specialized instructional support services, and mentoring services;
4. § 4103(c)(3)(B)(ii), allowing State Education Agencies to use Title IV funds to assist local education agencies to expand access to school based counseling and mental health resources;
5. § 4103(c)(3)(B)(ix), allowing State Education Agencies to use Title IV funds to design and implement evidence based mental health awareness training programs.

Tragically, too often, we have seen the consequences of not recognizing the early warning signs of students who are struggling with mental health issues. By continuing to provide mental health resources for students, we can both improve educational outcomes and intervene to assist students who may be in need of support. We hope you will agree that targeted, school-based mental health services are a worthy investment that ought to be prioritized in any reauthorization of ESEA.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

National Organizations

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Counseling Association

American Dance Therapy Association

American Federation of School Administrators

American Music Therapy Association

American Occupational Therapy Association

American Psychological Association

American School Counselor Association

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare

Association of Educational Services Agencies

Association of Educational Therapists

Coalition for Community Schools

Coalition for Juvenile Justice

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

Committee for Children
Council for Exceptional Children
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition
Futures Without Violence
GLSEN
Learning Disabilities Association of America
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
NABCH
NACBHDD
NAMI - The National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Pupil Services Administrators
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Council for Behavioral Health
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Education Association
NCLD
School Social Work Association of America
The Advocacy Institute

State Organizations

Alaska School Psychologists Association (ASPA)
Arizona School Counselor Association
Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania (ASPP)
Connecticut Association of School Psychologists
Connecticut School Counselor Association
Delaware Association of School Psychologists
Delaware School Counselor Association
Florida Association of School Psychologists

Georgia Association of School Psychologists
Idaho School Counselor Association
Idaho School Psychologist Association
Illinois School Counseling Association
Indiana School Counselor Association
Kentucky Association for Psychology in the Schools
Louisiana School Psychological Association
Maine Association of School Psychologists
Maryland School Psychologists' Association
Michigan Association of School Psychologists
Michigan School Counselor Association
Minnesota School Psychologists Association
Missouri Association of School Psychologists
Missouri School Counselor Association
Nebraska School Counselor Association
Nebraska School Psychology Association
New Hampshire Association of School Psychologists
New York State School Counselor Association
North Carolina School Counselor Association
North Dakota Association of School Psychologists
NYASP-New York Association of School Psychologists
Ohio School Psychologists Association
Oklahoma School Psychological Association
Palmetto State School Counselor Association
Pennsylvania School Counselors Association
Rhode Island School Counselors Association
South Carolina Association of School Psychologists
South Dakota Association of School Psychologists
Tennessee Association of School Psychologists
Texas Association of School Psychologists
Texas School Counselor Association
Vermont Association of School Psychologists
Virginia Academy of School Psychologists
West Virginia School Psychologists Association
WI-TASH
Wisconsin School Counselor Association

Wisconsin School Psychologists Association

Cc: United States Senate

US House of Representatives