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CONGRESSIONAL MENTAL HEALTH

CAUCUS

FOUNDER AND CO-CHAIR

CONGRESSIONAL YOUTH CHALLENGE

CAUCUS

FOUNDER AND CO-CHAIR

CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS

Grace F. Napolitano
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
31st District of California

July 13, 2023

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Chairwoman
House Energy & Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member
House Energy & Commerce Committee
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman McMorris Rodgers and Ranking Member Pallone:

As Co-Chair of the House Mental Health Caucus, I truly appreciate your bipartisan commitment to address the mental health needs of all Americans. **As you work to develop the committee's agenda for the rest of the year, I urge you to bring forward H.R. 3713, the Mental Health Services for Students Act,** which would provide funding for public schools across the country to partner with local mental health professionals to establish on-site mental health services for students.

The bill text is nearly identical to H.R. 721, the Mental Health Services for Students Act, which was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in May 2021, and included in the June 2022 House-passed H.R. 7666, the Restoring Hope for Mental Health and Well-Being Act. Only one change has been made to increase funding from \$130 million to \$300 million. In the 117th Congress, the bill had 86 bipartisan cosponsors and the support of over 50 mental health organizations and teacher unions.

Mental illness affects millions of students across America, with 1 out of 5 suffering from some form. Most go untreated because they either cannot afford care, lack access, or do not know where to turn for help. Investing in preventive mental health care could give these young people a better future. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), without access to mental health care, students with mental disorders can have increased problems at home, in school, and in forming friendships, and it can interfere with their healthy development into adulthood.

The COVID-19 pandemic further upended the lives of our nation's children and youth and added additional stressors that have significantly strained their mental health and wellbeing. 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. 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.

H.R. 3713 is a much-needed part of the solution. By providing increased federal funding for mental health services in our schools, this bill will help students with preventable mental illnesses get access to the services they need. The lack of school-based mental health services has gone on long enough, and we must give our young people access to the services they deserve.

This legislation is based on the successful Youth Suicide Prevention Program in Los Angeles County, currently operating in 35 local schools. The program has proven to be tremendously successful in helping students overcome mental health issues and improving quality of life for them and their families. H.R. 3713 seeks to expand this model nationwide to provide more students with the benefits of on-site mental health care.

The Energy & Commerce Committee has shown a bipartisan effort to address our ongoing youth mental health crisis, and it is imperative that we continue to act on this issue. Thank you for your support and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Grace F. Napolitano". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress