



June 7, 2023

U.S. Senate
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our 3 million members and the 50 million students they serve, we would like to submit the following comments for the record of tomorrow's hearing, "Why Are So Many American Youth in a Mental Health Crisis? Exploring Causes and Solutions." This is a vital topic as students and families emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. We embrace public dialogue on mental healthcare for our nation's students.

Our youth are in crisis. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than a third (37 percent) of high school students reported experiencing poor mental health during the pandemic, and 44 percent reported feeling persistently sad or hopeless during the past year. In addition, more than 1 in 5 students (22 percent) seriously considered attempting suicide and 1 in 10 (10 percent) attempted suicide. Suicide attempts occurred more often among Black students than students from other groups, and increased among Black and White students from 2011 to 2021.

We are pleased that Congress responded to this crisis through the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, creating and funding two programs that begin to address these needs. We urge continued support for the:

- **Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant Program** that provides competitive grants to support a strong pipeline into the mental health profession, including innovative partnerships to prepare qualified school-based mental health service providers for employment in schools.
- **School-Based Mental Health (SBMH) Services Grant Program** that provides competitive grants to states and school districts to increase the number of qualified mental health service providers delivering school-based mental health services to students in local educational agencies with demonstrated need.

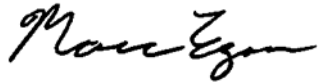
In addition, we urge continued support for the **Full-Service Community Schools Program** that meets the unique needs of the locations they serve by engaging with parents, students, and the community. Through this grant program, student and family needs are assessed, and programs developed and opportunities created in partnership with students, families, and community

members to meet those needs. A critical aspect of these opportunities is the ability to help youth and their families access mental health services and supports.

We know that the programs cited above are not the only programs to address the mental health and overall health of students, and that we must continue to partner to address the crisis facing young people today. NEA and its members stand ready to work with you to do so.

We thank you for holding this hearing and giving us the opportunity to submit these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marc Egan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association