

November 13, 2025

The Honorable Joni Ernst
Co-Founder
Senate Mental Health Caucus
United States Senate

The Honorable Don Bacon
Co-Chair
Congressional Mental Health Caucus
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Alex Padilla
Co-Founder
Senate Mental Health Caucus
United States Senate

The Honorable Donald Beyer
Co-chair
Congressional Mental Health Caucus
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Tina Smith
Co-Founder
Senate Mental Health Caucus
United States Senate

The Honorable Tony Gonzales
Co-chair
Congressional Mental Health Caucus
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Thom Tillis
Co-Founder
Senate Mental Health Caucus
United States Senate

The Honorable Andrea Salinas
Co-Chair
Congressional Mental Health Caucus
United States House of Representatives

Re: Urgent Need to Fully Fund School-Based Mental Health Workforce Development Grants in FY 2026

Dear Senators Ernst, Padilla, Smith, and Tillis, and Representatives Bacon, Beyer, Gonzales, and Salinas:

We are deeply grateful for your leadership of the Senate and Congressional Mental Health Caucuses. Your steadfast commitment to addressing the nation's youth mental health crisis has brought much-needed attention to these challenges and built bipartisan consensus around ensuring that every young person has access to care and hope for the future.

As FY 2026 appropriations negotiations advance, we respectfully urge the Mental Health Caucuses to **support the Senate proposal** to direct what remains of \$190 million in School Safety National Activities funding—after Project SERV and continuation awards—to be split between the **Mental Health Services Professional Demonstration Grant (MHSP)** and the **School-Based Mental Health Services Grant (SBMH)** programs. These programs were

authorized following the tragic Uvalde school shooting as a cornerstone of the nation's strategy to strengthen the school-based mental health workforce and keep our students safe, healthy, and ready to learn.

The evidence shows that the MHSP and SBMH programs work. Between May and December 2023 alone, data from a single cohort of grantees - though not representative of all grants during that period - show that the funding [supported over 775,000 students, hired 1,296 new providers, trained 1,767 professionals, and placed 1,191 graduate students](#) in practicums and internships. In classrooms across America, these investments are helping children manage anxiety, reconnect to school, and stay on track to graduate.

Despite this success, the need remains significant. Nationally, schools have reached only **47%** of recommended staffing levels for school psychologists, **66%** for counselors, and **42%** for social workers. Without sustained investment, schools risk losing critical professionals and progress at a time when students' needs are rising, not falling.

This is not a partisan issue. Americans across the political spectrum recognize the urgency:

- **90%** of adults say expanding access to mental health care should be a priority for elected officials.
- **80%** of parents support schools providing access to mental health professionals.

Supporting the Senate proposal to allocate what remains of \$190 million in School Safety National Activities funding—after Project SERV and continuation awards—to the MHSP and SBMH programs in FY26 **will expand access in rural and under-resourced communities and build a sustainable workforce pipeline of fully prepared trained professionals ready to serve in schools nationwide.** This is a fiscally responsible investment in prevention, community safety, and the long-term health of our children and workforce.

Thank you for your continued leadership and for working together to ensure that every student in America has the support they need to thrive.

Sincerely,
Inseparable
National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)
Sandy Hook Promise
Active Minds
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Psychiatric Association

American Psychological Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)
CEC-Division for Research
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)
Clinical Social Work Association
Committee for Children
Council for Exceptional Children Division of Research
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Crisis Text Line
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action
Epilepsy Foundation of America
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health & Social Justice
Healthy Schools Campaign
Hope Squad
International OCD Foundation
International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses
Mental Health America
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Board for Certified Counselors
National League for Nursing
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
Postpartum Support International
REDC Consortium
School-Based Health Alliance
Students Engaged in Advancing Texas (SEAT)
The American Counseling Association
The Children's Partnership
The Jed Foundation
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
The Trevor Project
Western Youth Services