

**Energy and Commerce Member Day**  
**December 12, 2025**  
***The Mental Health Services for Students Act***

Good morning and thank you to Energy and Commerce Leadership for holding this Member Day. Chair Guthrie and Ranking Member Pallone, I am here today to present my bill, H.R. 5557, the Mental Health Services for Students Act.

Our children and young people are struggling. The United States is in the midst of a mental health crisis, and our youth are bearing the brunt. Last year, *over 20 percent of children* aged 12-17 reported at least one major depressive episode in the preceding year. And 15 percent of youth who experienced a major depressive episode reported that their ability to function at work, school, and home was impacted.

In 2023, more than 20 percent of high school students seriously considered attempting suicide. *One in five*. That is not okay, and we should not accept this as our status quo.

As Co-Chair of the Bipartisan Congressional Mental Health Caucus, I have spent a lot of time engaging with families, children, and providers to understand what our children need to thrive. This past May, the Mental Health Caucus hosted a roundtable with children and young people from across the country to hear from them their frustrations with mental health services that don't meet their needs.

There's no great mystery about what it takes to help these children. It's simple. They need resources. And they need these resources to meet them where they are—in their schools.

Currently, over half of our public schools nationwide report struggling to provide adequate mental health services to their students,<sup>1</sup> and things will likely only get worse.

The next decade will bring half a trillion dollars in Medicaid cuts as well as cuts to the Department of Education and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. We are going in the *wrong direction* toward meeting the needs of our students and children.

My Mental Health Services for Students act helps move us in the right direction. It will help get providers into schools and proactively help students build resiliency and equip them with the tools they need to thrive throughout their life, putting us on the right path to meet this mental health crisis head on.

More specifically, my legislation expands SAMHSA's Project AWARE Program.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12013806/>

Project AWARE, or the Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education program, develops sustainable infrastructure for school-based mental health programs and services.

Project AWARE focuses on three tiers of mental health funding. First, the program prioritizes universal prevention and mental health promotion to keep kids healthy and give them the tools to manage life's ups and downs. This is no different than how we promote healthy eating and exercise to mitigate chronic disease.

Second, Project AWARE devotes funding to intervention services through school-based screenings to identify at-risk children and provide services to youth experiencing distress, trauma, bereavement, or other issues.

And finally, the program focuses on children who are already exhibiting mental and substance use disorder issues and ensures they have the right supports to get on the path to recovery.

We know that Project AWARE is effective. In fact, my friend and former Rep. Napolitano advocated for nationalizing and expanding Project AWARE during her time in Congress because this program has been working in her district since 2001.

The Youth Suicide Prevention program serves 35 schools in the Los Angeles area and has proved to be tremendously successful in helping students overcome mental health issues and improving quality of life for them and their families.

In Oregon, we've invested \$5.4 million into the Community Care Development Project, and we've seen similar success. Now, it's time to expand on the success of these programs so they can benefit students and families across the country.

Investing in our children is the healthy and fiscally right choice. That's why, so far, this bill has garnered over 60 bipartisan cosponsors and counting.

In the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, Rep. Napolitano introduced this legislation with 130 bipartisan cosponsors. In the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress this bill passed the House floor twice—once as a standalone bill and once as part of the Restoring Hope for Mental Wellbeing Act. The bill also enjoys support from countless mental health and education associations.

It's clear that healthy children who have the tools to care for their mental and physical health become high-functioning, independent adults. This bill gives them these tools, which is why I ask that this committee advance this bill.

Thank you for your time and please do follow up with my office if you have any questions.

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