



Higher Education Mental Health Act of 2023

Reps. David Trone (D-MD), Susan Wild (D-PA), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), & John Joyce (R-PA)

Background

More than 75% of mental health conditions begin before the age of 24, but institutions of higher education often are at a disadvantage in handling the mental health needs of their students. From 2010 to 2015, the number of higher education students using mental health counseling centers increased by 30% to 40%, while overall enrollment only increased by 5%. The pandemic exacerbated these needs; a recent study found that 68% of students seeking mental health support at a major institution of higher education said the pandemic hurt their motivation or focus. Additionally, 67% said the pandemic led to feelings of loneliness or isolation.

Postsecondary education offers students a new level of independence, often accompanied by increased levels of stress for which young people need support. Before we can fully address the gap in higher education mental health services, we must understand what challenges students face and how that impacts their mental health. A coordinated national effort - bringing together advocates, experts, stakeholders, and students - will help ensure the mental health needs of students are addressed.

About the Legislation

The Higher Education Mental Health Act would:

- Establish a national commission to study the mental health concerns facing students at institutions of higher education
- Provide a report to Congress with information on the services available to students with mental health conditions and the current policies in place to assist students to remain in school and complete their degrees
- Create a roadmap for improving the mental health services available at colleges and universities

Support for the Higher Education Mental Health Act

ACPA – College Student Education International, Active Minds, ACTNow for Mental Health, Allegany College of Maryland, American Counseling Association, American College Health Association (ACHA), American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, American Group Psychotherapy Association, American Psychological Association, American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, American Therapeutic

Recreation Association, Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare, Association on Higher Education and Disability, Association of Title IX Administrators (ATIXA), Autism Society of America, Coalition to End Social Isolation & Loneliness, Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance, Garrett College, Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice, Higher Education Consortium for Special Education, International OCD Foundation, JED Foundation, Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance, National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Association for Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment (NABITA), National Association of Councils of Developmental Disabilities, National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, National Board of Certified Counselors, National Disability Rights Network, National League of Nursing, National Registrar of Health Service Psychologists, NIRSA: Leaders in Collegiate Recreation, SMART Recovery, Teacher Education Division of the Council for Expectational Children, The Crisis Residential Association, The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health, The Trevor Project, University of California Student Association, Well Being Trust, Youth Power Project

Senate companion led by Sen. Casey (D-PA) and Sen. Kaine (D-VA)