Dear Leader Schumer and Leader McConnell:

On behalf of the undersigned mental health and education-focused organizations, we respectfully request that you bring forward for consideration through Unanimous Consent (UC) Senators Maggie Hassan’s (D-NH) and Joni Ernst’s (R-IA) bipartisan S.1543, the Suicide Training and Awareness Nationally Delivered for Universal Prevention (STANDUP) Act. Having passed the House in May and reported out of Senate HELP Committee on September 21, we urge you to immediately bring forward STANDUP Act this week during Suicide Prevention Awareness month (September), to advance student suicide awareness and prevention for grades 6-12.

Since 2010, suicide has been the second-leading cause of death for young Americans ages 10-24. Particularly disturbing are the number of suicides of children ages 10-14, which has nearly tripled since 2007, and adolescent suicide rates for ages 12-19, which increased by 87% from 2007 to 2017. Sadly, certain communities have borne the brunt of this epidemic. In 2019, suicide rates among American Indian and Alaskan Native adolescents (ages 15-19) were 60% higher than the national average for all teenagers. 40% of LGBTQ+ adolescents reported seriously considering attempting suicide in 2020. A study published this month found that from 2003-2017, Black boys (ages 5 to 12 years old) were twice as likely to die by suicide compared to white peers.

Before suicides occur, there are often warning signs present. Research shows that 70% of those who die by suicide tell someone beforehand or present another warning sign. Given the high likelihood of warning signs, suicide awareness and prevention trainings may mitigate youth suicides. For example, a randomized control study found a 40% drop in suicide attempts in schools that implemented the Signs of Suicide Prevention Program. By educating and empowering students to recognize the signs of suicidal ideation in themselves and their peers, these trainings can help schools and adolescents identify at-risk individuals, connect them to care, and avert tragedy.

The STANDUP Act encourages more States, Tribes, and schools to implement life-saving policies by prioritizing Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Project AWARE grant applications that demonstrate a current policy for student suicide prevention awareness and training or a plan to create such a policy. Additionally, in order to support States, Tribes, and schools, SAMHSA is required to provide ongoing best practices, training, and technical assistance for the implementation of student suicide awareness and prevention training policies.

We appreciate your commitment to keeping America’s youth safe and expanding the use of policies that are proven to save lives. We urge the Senate to act quickly on S.1543 by bringing the bill forward for UC this week.

Sincerely,

American Art Therapy Association

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

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1 Ten Leading Causes of Death and Injury Charts, Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Available at https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/LeadingCauses.html
3 Ibid (5)
4 Ibid (5)
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association of Suicidology
American Counseling Association
American Dance Therapy Association
American Federation of Teachers
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychoanalytic Association
American Psychological Association
American School Counselor Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Boys Town
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Clinical Social Work Association
Coalition for Juvenile Justice
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
Committee for Children
Council on Social Work Education
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition
Education Development Center
Educators for Excellence
Families USA
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
International OCD Foundation
The Kennedy Forum
Mental Health America
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of County Behavioral Health & Development Disability Directors
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Association for Children’s Behavioral Health
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Education Association
National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform
National Indian Education Association
National PTA
National Superintendents Roundtable
National Board for Certified Counselors
National Eating Disorders Association
National Federation of Families
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
Postpartum Support International
Residential Eating Disorders Consortium
RI International
Sandy Hook Promise
Schizophrenia & Psychosis Action Alliance
School Social Work Association of America
SchoolHouse Connection
SMART RECOVERY
Treatment Communities of America
The Trevor Project
The School Superintendents Association (AASA)
Well Being Trust