

September 29, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-230, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

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<sup>st</sup>, 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,<sup>1</sup> and adolescent suicide rates for ages 12-19, which increased by 87% from 2007 to 2017.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 40% of LGBTQ+ adolescents reported seriously considering attempting suicide in 2020.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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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<sup>1</sup> Ten Leading Causes of Death and Injury Charts, Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/LeadingCauses.html>

<sup>2</sup> Olson, G., De Biasi, A., Ilakkuvan, V., & Auerbach, J. (2019). Addressing a Crisis: Cross-Sector Strategies to Prevent Adolescent Substance Use and Suicide. Available at [https://www.tfah.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/TFAH2019TeensPainRptFINAL10\\_24.pdf](https://www.tfah.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/TFAH2019TeensPainRptFINAL10_24.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid (5)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid (5)

<sup>5</sup> Bridge, J., Horowitz, L., Fontanella, C., Sheftall, A., Greenhouse, J., Kelleher, K., & Campo, J. (2018). Age-Related Racial Disparity in Suicide Rates Among US Youths From 2001 Through 2015. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 172(7), 697. doi: 10.1001/jamapediatrics.2018.0399

<sup>6</sup> Robins, E., Gassner, S., Kayes, J., Wilkinson, R.H., & Murphy, G.E. (1959). The communication of suicidal intent: A study of 134 consecutive cases of successful (completed) suicide. *Am J Psychiatry*, 115(8), 724-733.

<sup>7</sup> Aseltine RH, Jr, DeMartino R. An outcome evaluation of the SOS suicide prevention program. *Am J Public Health* (2004) 94:446– 51.10.2105/AJPH.94.3.446

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 Jewish Federations of North America

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