

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 17, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-232 U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204 U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McCarthy,

Thank you for your leadership in passing legislation to support the urgent needs of our communities as we address the COVID-19 pandemic. As Congress prepares for a Phase IV package to help address this worsening public health and economic crisis, we respectfully request that you prioritize funding for trauma-related programs to support the health and well-being of our nation's youth and families.

As the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has noted, fear and anxiety about a disease such as COVID-19 can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. People who may respond more intensely to the stress of a crisis include children and teens. Left unaddressed, childhood traumatic stress can have long-term effects beyond this pandemic. One in four youth - or 35 million Americans - experience a traumatic incident before the age of 16. It is clear this crisis will worsen this statistic and hurt our vulnerable communities the most. Children who experience adverse events are more likely to suffer from chronic health problems and mental illness as an adult. Those who have experienced more than four traumatic experiences are twice as likely to not complete high school, ten times as likely to misuse drugs, and twelve times more likely to commit suicide than their counterparts.

However, if communities are equipped with tools to address these stressors, evidence shows that the long-lasting impact of traumatic stress can be mitigated. In recent years, Congress has recognized the importance of identifying children suffering from trauma and early intervention when it dedicated an entire section of P.L. 115-271, the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act, to trauma-informed care. It is more critical now than ever before to fund and implement evidence-based approaches that promote resiliency in our young people and families.

We therefore respectfully request you examine and prioritize the following provisions:

\$80 million in grant funding to expand trauma support services in schools

Nearly every school has students who have been exposed to traumatic experiences. P.L. 115-271 created new grants to expand evidence-based trauma support services in schools to improve access to effective interventions. The law authorizes the Secretary of Education, in coordination with the Assistant Secretary of Mental Health and Substance Use, to make grants to link educational agencies with mental health systems to increase student access to services. It is important that students have access to these interventions so that they can strengthen resiliency and recover from potential additional adverse experiences linked to the COVID-19 crisis when they return to school. The extended out-of-school time, necessary social distancing, and widespread harm caused by this pandemic may serve as an additional stressor for children who already experience significant challenges in their everyday lives. Schools should provide a safe space for youth, and it is essential to equip our educational settings with as many resources as possible to support vulnerable communities. An appropriation of \$50 million is needed to establish and evaluate these critical grants to support our educational system as it helps mitigate the impact of trauma that too many of our students endure.

We request \$30 million in supplemental appropriations for SAMSHA's Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resilience in Education) state education agency grants. This program increases awareness of mental health issues among school-aged youth, provides training for adults who engage with youth to detect and respond to mental health needs, and connects youth, who may have behavioral health issues, and their families to needed services. Dedicated funding for current and additional grantees would help address the mental health needs of students associated with trauma caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and extended school closures.

\$20 million in additional funding for the National Child Traumatic Stress Network

We request \$20 million in supplemental appropriations for the existing National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN). A related provision was included in Sen. Patty Murray's/Rep. Bobby Scott's Supporting Students in Response to Coronavirus Act (S.3489/H.R.6275). The NCTSN works to raise the quality of care and increase access to services for children and families who experience or witness traumatic events. The NCTSN can use their existing network to quickly provide resources and support to communities to address the traumatic impacts of the pandemic. Funds could also flow to new grantees to further the reach of this work. We specifically request \$10 million in dedicated funds to provide resources for families, caregivers, early care and education programs, teachers, principals, administrators, and other school leaders to care for children adversely affected by stress associated with COVID-19 and \$10 million dedicated to addressing secondary trauma to support our first responders, health workforce, and their children.

Youth suicide and mental health disorder rates are already climbing, and we cannot allow them to skyrocket due to this crisis. We must address this in a timely and effective manner. Thank you for your consideration of our request and your continued leadership to support our nation's youth and families.

Sincerely,



David Trone
Member of Congress



Denver Riggleman
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

/s/ Brian Fitzpatrick

Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

/s/ Sheila Jackson Lee

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

/s/ Grace F. Napolitano

Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress

/s/ John Yarmuth

John Yarmuth
Member of Congress

/s/ Donna E. Shalala

Donna E. Shalala
Member of Congress

/s/ Josh Harder

Josh Harder
Member of Congress

/s/ James P. McGovern

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

/s/ Jamie Raskin

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

/s/ Joyce Beatty

Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

/s/ Eleanor Holmes Norton

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

/s/ André Carson

André Carson
Member of Congress

/s/ Susan Wild

Susan Wild
Member of Congress

/s/ Barbara Lee

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

/s/ Jahana Hayes

Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress