

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 25, 2025

The Honorable Linda McMahon
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary McMahon:

We are writing to inquire about recent reporting that the Department of Education is reallocating approximately \$1 billion in federal grant funding which was specifically allocated by Congress through the *Bipartisan Safer Communities Act* to help schools hire more psychologists, counselors and other mental health workers. Given the impact this action would have on the health and wellbeing of children from across the nation, we are requesting more information on the Department of Education's decision and the Department's plan to "re-envision and re-compete" its mental health program funds.

There is currently a shortage of school-based mental health professionals in our country. National mental health organizations recommend a ratio of one school counselor and one school social worker for every 250 students, and a ratio of one school psychologist for every 500 students. Unfortunately, across each profession, the national ratio is more than double the recommendation, with some states and school districts faring even worse. These critical shortages undermine the availability of high-quality services to students and families, particularly in rural, underserved, and other hard-to-staff school districts.

Students are six times as likely to receive needed mental health care when it is provided at school, and the majority of youth who receive needed services do so at school.¹ This includes prevention, early detection, and early intervention efforts, which are critical components of comprehensive mental and behavioral health services and crisis prevention. Integrating mental health services in schools has helped both students and staff succeed by addressing issues such as bullying, self-esteem, and suicide, while improving schools' capacity to identify, refer, and provide services to help students in need. School-based mental health professionals have improved staff retention, helped keep students in school, and promoted learning environments where students feel safe, supported, and ready to learn.

The *Bipartisan Safer Communities Act* provided \$500 million each to the only two existing grant programs focused on addressing the critical shortage of school-based mental health professionals and increasing access to vital school-based services: the Mental Health Services Professional Demonstration Grant and the School-Based Mental Health Services Program. Combined, these two competitive grants address the shortage in two distinct and essential ways: by increasing the

¹ The Value of School Psychologists. <https://www.nasponline.org/research-and-policy/advocacy/the-value-of-school-psychologists>

available workforce, and by helping districts support increased positions to improve access to services. Given the unprecedented needs of our students, we must build on the work of this bipartisan legislation.

The Mental Health Services Professional Demonstration Grant (MHSP) and the School-Based Mental Health Services Grant (SBMH) programs have proven to be extremely effective at addressing the root causes of shortages in school mental health professionals and increasing access to comprehensive school mental health services. The MHSP strengthens and expands the workforce pipeline by supporting innovative partnerships between institutions of higher education and high-needs school districts to train school mental health professionals. In just one cohort of grantees' first project year (from May to December 2023), MHSP funding supported:

- The training of 1,767 school mental health professionals;
- The placement of 1,191 graduate students in a supervised practicum/internship, immediately increasing services to students in high-need school districts; and
- The hiring of 133 school mental health providers in high-need school districts.

Building upon this work, the SBMH supports state and local education agencies in recruiting, hiring, and retaining school mental health professionals. In just one cohort of grantees' first year (also from May to December 2023), SBMH funding:

- Supported the hiring of 1,163 school mental health professionals;
- Supported the retention of 13,155 school mental health professionals; and
- Provided mental and behavioral health services to 774,385 students.

This data shows the impact of just one cohort of the MHSP and SBMH grantees in the first nine months of their projects. Now is not the time to turn back on investing in our children's mental health and the mental health workforce. Uncertainty jeopardizes the work that has been done to increase comprehensive youth mental and behavioral health services, and the availability of school-based mental health professionals across the country.

With these concerns in mind, we respectfully request that the Department of Education provide answers to the following questions by Monday, July 14th, 2025:

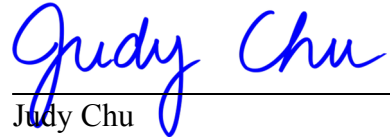
1. What is the Department's plan for addressing the youth mental health crisis?
2. Please provide a detailed plan on how the Department plans to re-envision and re-compete its mental health program funds to, as the Department says, "*more effectively support student's behavioral health needs.*"
3. Please provide details on how the Department plans to increase comprehensive youth mental and behavioral health services, and the availability of school-based mental health professionals across the country.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Brian K. Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



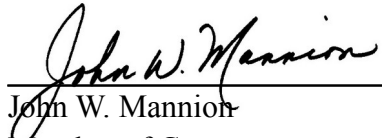
Judy Chu
Member of Congress



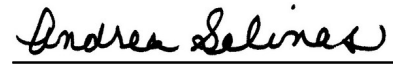
Don Bacon
Member of Congress



Lucy McBath
Member of Congress



John W. Mannion
Member of Congress



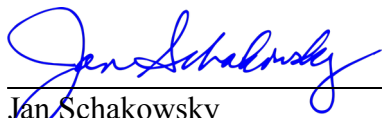
Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



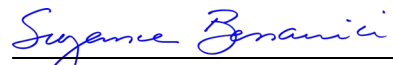
Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



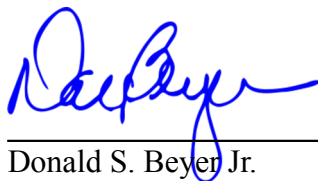
John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress




Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



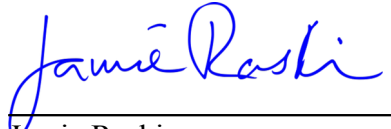
Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



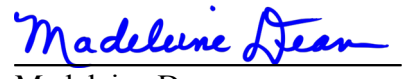
Seth Magaziner
Member of Congress




Dina Titus
Member of Congress




Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



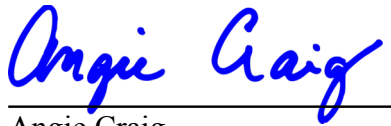
Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress




Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress



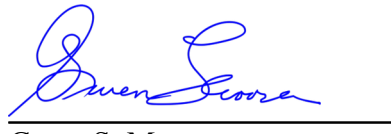
Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress




Angie Craig
Member of Congress




George Whitesides
Member of Congress




Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress



Maxine Dexter
Member of Congress



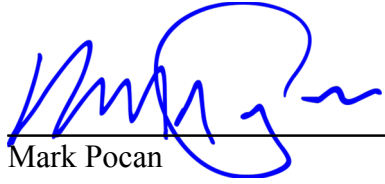
Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



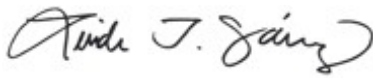
Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress



Val Hoyle
Member of Congress



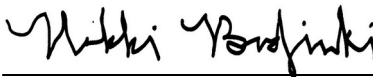
Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



Nikki Budzinski
Member of Congress



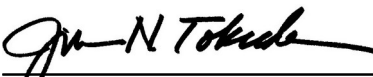
Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



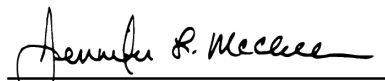
Sean Casten
Member of Congress



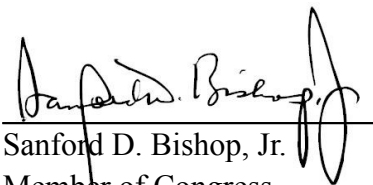
Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



JM Tokuda
Member of Congress



Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress



Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



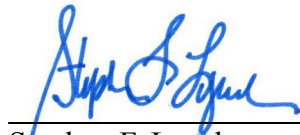
Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Chris Deluzio
Member of Congress