

May 10, 2022

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chair
House Energy & Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
House Energy & Commerce Committee
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Pallone and Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers,

On behalf of the undersigned mental health and substance use disorder organizations, we respectfully request your support of the bipartisan, bicameral Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Reauthorization Act (H.R. 7255) led by Representatives Trahan (D-MA-03), McMorris Rodgers (R-WA-05), Axne (D-IA-03), and Kim (R-CA-39). This legislation would reauthorize this impactful federal grant program to support states, tribes, and campuses with the implementation of youth suicide prevention and early intervention strategies.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth in the United States.¹ The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated this crisis with 1 in 5 teens have considered suicide during the pandemic.² Mental-health related emergency department visits for suicide attempts in early 2021 among adolescents 12-17 years of age increased by 31% compared with the same period in 2019.³ We also know that not all demographics are impacted the same. In 2019, suicide rates among American Indian and Alaskan Native adolescents (ages 15-19) were 60% higher than the national average for all teenagers.⁴ From 2003-2017, Black boys (ages 5 to 12 years old) were twice as likely to die by suicide compared to white peers.⁶ LGBTQ youth are more than 4 times as likely to attempt suicide compared to their straight and cisgender peers.⁴ Despite these trends, federal investment in suicide prevention has remained nearly stagnant and current funding levels do not meet the current needs for this population. For example, applicants for Garrett Lee Smith grant funding would have required an additional \$23.5 million in Fiscal Year 2019 alone.

From 2006-2015, Garrett Lee Smith initiatives have been shown to lower youth suicide rates and for a longer period of time in counties with these programs in comparison to counties without such programs in place.⁵ Another study showed that these programs implemented within counties was estimated to avert

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. About Underlying Cause of Death, 1999-2020.

² Ivey-Stephenson AZ, Demissie Z, Crosby AE, et al. Suicidal Ideation and Behaviors Among High School Students — Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States, 2019. *MMWR Suppl* 2020;69(Suppl-1):47–55. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.su6901a6>

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. Emergency Department Visits for Suspected Suicide Attempts Among Persons Aged 12-25 Years Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic—United States, January 2019-May 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7024e1.htm>.

⁴ Johns, M. M., Lowry, R., Haderxhanaj, L. T., et al. (2020). Trends in violence victimization and suicide risk by sexual identity among high school students — Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States, 2015–2019. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 69,(Suppl-1):19–27. See also Johns, M. M., Lowry, R., Haderxhanaj, L. T., et al. (2020). Trends in violence victimization and suicide risk by sexual identity among high school students — Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States, 2015–2019. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 69,(Suppl-1):19–27.

⁵ Godoy Garraza, L., Kuiper, N., Goldston, D., McKeon, R., & Walrath, C. (2019). Long-term impact of the Garrett Lee Smith Youth Suicide Prevention Program on youth suicide mortality, 2006-2015. *Journal of child psychology and psychiatry, and allied disciplines*, 60(10), 1142–1147. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.13058>

79,000 suicide attempts.⁶ Building off these previous successes, the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Reauthorization Act of 2022 would increase funding by approximately \$13 million for a total of \$57 million. Additionally, grant determinations must incentivize all elements an evidence-based framework of youth suicide prevention including leadership, training, identification, engagement, treatment, transition, and improvement.⁷

We thank you for your consideration for this critical piece of legislation and look forward to working with you to continue to protect the health and safety of our nation's youth.

Sincerely,

2020 Mom

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work

American Association of Child and Adolescent Physicians

American Dance Therapy Association

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

American Mental Health Counselors Association

American Occupational Therapy Association

American Psychiatric Association

American Psychological Association

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness

Centerstone

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Children's Hospital Association

Clinical Social Work Association

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action

Global Alliance for Behavioral Health & Social Justice

Inseparable

International Society for Psychiatric Mental health Nurses

⁶ B., Reid, H., & McKeon, R. (2015). Effect of the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Suicide Prevention Program on Suicide Attempts Among Youths. *JAMA psychiatry*, 72(11), 1143–1149. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2015.1933>

⁷ Education Development Center, Zero Suicide Framework. Retrieved from <https://zerosuicide.edc.org/about/framework>

Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Social Workers
National Council for Mental Wellbeing
National Eating Disorders Association
National Federation of Families
National League of Nursing
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
Psychotherapy Action Network (PsiAN)
REDC Consortium
RI International, Inc.
Sandy Hook Promise
SMART Recovery
The Jed Foundation
The Kennedy Forum
The Trevor Project
Treatment Communities of America
Trust for America's Health