

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 13, 2024

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education, and Related
Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelly Moore Capito
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Baldwin and Ranking Member Capito:

We write to request your strong support of key suicide prevention programs in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (LHSSE) Appropriations bill.

As you know, suicide is a leading cause of death across all age groups, and the suicide rate increased again in 2022 by 2.6 percent, with an estimated 49,449 Americans lost to suicide. The numbers are even more dire for young people – 10 percent of high school students attempted suicide one or more times in 2022. On average, there are 132 suicides every day, roughly one suicide every eleven minutes, a staggering statistic that must be met with increased investments in prevention, intervention, and research.

Suicide is a serious public health problem with lasting harmful effects on individuals, families, and communities. While its causes are complex, the goal of suicide prevention is simple: reduce factors that lead to greater risk and increase factors that promote resilience. It is crucial that we prioritize the mental health of Americans as we navigate the complexities of post-pandemic life. This is why we urge you to support the following requests:

- **\$602 million for the 988 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (988).** 988 coordinates a network of over 180 crisis centers across the United States by providing 24/7 free and confidential suicide prevention and crisis intervention services for people in distress and their loved ones. 988 routes calls from anywhere in the country to a network of certified local crisis centers that can then link callers to local emergency, mental health, and social services resources. Additional funding is needed to ensure that 988 is equipped to handle increasing call and outreach volume since switching to an easier to remember, three-digit phone number in July 2022. Since the switch, calls, texts, and chats to 988 have more than doubled, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Agency (SAMHSA) expects outreach to 988 to increase to an estimated 7.5 million contacts in FY2025. Increased funding would also help support specialized services for LGBTQ youth, given the disproportionate impact of suicide on this population, as well as Spanish language services.
- **\$30 million for National Strategy for Suicide Prevention (NSSP) Grants, including \$2.75 million for a new innovative partnership between SAMHSA and the Administration for Community Living to prevent suicide among older adults.** The NSSP grant program supports states' efforts to raise suicide awareness, establish emergency room referral processes, and improve clinical care practice standards. Deaths by suicide

among older adults age 65 and over have risen by 8 percent in 2022, representing 22 percent of all suicides in the US. This funding would lay the groundwork for long term efforts to reduce the rate of suicide among older adults by increasing suicide prevention screening, referral, and training in this population.

- **\$68 million for the Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).** With increased funding, the CDC could expand the number of grants it can award to more states and territories, and scale up successful pilot programs and data collection, informing preventions models and programming across the country. It is critical that we continue these efforts to enable CDC to build upon this work over the long term.

- **At least \$70 million for the Garrett Lee Smith Youth Suicide Prevention Programs.** Since 2005, this funding has supported hundreds of youth suicide prevention grants in all states, as well as grants to tribes or tribal organizations, territories, and institutions of higher education. Suicide is the third-leading cause of death among individuals between the ages of 10 and 24. This funding is critical to reducing these statistics and saving lives.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests, and we look forward to working with you on the FY 2025 LHHSE Appropriations Bill.

Sincerely,

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