

May 6, 2022

The Honorable John C. Carney Jr., Governor
The State of Delaware
Delaware Legislative Hall
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Governor Carney:

As organizations deeply concerned about the health and well-being of students, we urge you to endorse House Bill 300. This legislation will provide mental health support for youth by providing additional school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists in all Delaware middle schools. Prevention and early intervention efforts offered by mental health professionals in middle schools will help ensure our youth thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Our children are in crisis, as demonstrated by the data points below.

- Last year, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the Children's Hospital Association declared a [national emergency](#) for youth mental health. They emphasized high rates of loneliness, anxiety, depression, trauma, and suicidality in youth.
- Nationally, mental health-related emergency department visits are up 31% among youth ages 12-17.
- Mental health disorders are the most common health problem for school aged youth. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, up to [one in five youth](#) are affected by a mental health disorder. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, 50% of lifetime mental illnesses [begin by age 14](#).

In Delaware, approximately 11,000 children are estimated to have experienced [an episode of major depression](#) in the past year – **more than 15% of children in the state**. Of those children, [fewer than half receive help](#). Untreated mental illness leads to negative outcomes including increased risk of homelessness, substance misuse, incarceration, and suicide, [the second leading cause of death](#) for youth ages 10 to 24.

Last year, you signed House Bill 100, which added resources for mental health professionals in all Delaware elementary schools. We are deeply appreciative of the support and leadership you have shown to ensure our youngest students can flourish, but our work is not yet finished. We ask that you continue what has been started by committing to the next phase of this important endeavor, investing in mental health professionals in Delaware's middle schools.

Furthermore, House Bill 300 will support our educators, many of whom are experiencing burnout, seeking early retirement, or leaving the profession altogether, by providing trained professionals whose focus is on supporting student mental health. House Bill 300 will ensure that all Delaware middle schools have the resources they need to employ trained and experienced mental health professionals. We ask that you use the full weight of your office as Governor to endorse this bill.

We thank you for your time and continued dedication to Delaware's children.

Sincerely,

NAMI Delaware
Inseparable
Ability Network of Delaware

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention,
Delaware Chapter
Arsht Cannon Fund

atTAcK addiction
Beau Biden Foundation
Brandywine Counseling & Community Services
Champions for Children's Mental Health
Children & Families First
ChristianaCare
ContactLifeline, Inc.
Delaware Association of School Psychologists
Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Delaware Coalition Against Gun Violence
Delaware Guidance Services
Delaware School Based Health Alliance
Delaware School Counselor Association
Delaware State Education Association
Disabilities Law Program of Community Legal
Aid Society, Inc.
Find Your Anchor
Healthy Schools Campaign
(The) Jed Foundation

Jewish Family Services of Delaware
(The) Kennedy Forum
MeadowWood Hospital
Mental Health America
Mental Health Association in Delaware
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
Nemours Children's Health
Prevent Child Abuse Delaware
Rockford Center
Rodel
School-Based Health Alliance
School Social Workers Association of Delaware
SL24: UnLocke the Light
SUN Behavioral
Sussex County Health Coalition
UNICEF USA
Westside Family Healthcare
YourMomCares