

December 18, 2025

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
U.S Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
U.S Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Capito, Ranking Member Baldwin, Chair Aderholt, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of the Well Being Working Group (WBWG) and undersigned organizations, we urge you to protect primary prevention programs that support community well-being as you negotiate the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) appropriations legislation. The WBWG is a coalition of 40 organizations committed to advancing population-level strategies that strengthen the social, physical, and economic conditions that support mental and emotional well-being. We support primary prevention and early intervention strategies that prevent substance misuse, suicide, and other mental health challenges.

Primary prevention strategies prevent the initial onset of mental health challenges, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and substance misuse. Primary prevention complements investments in treatment and recovery services and relieves pressure on emergency health care providers and post-crisis intervention programs.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has played a key role in bolstering prevention strategies and addressing behavioral health within communities. CDC utilizes a population-level approach to track trends and identify emerging issues, provide technical assistance to states and localities, and fund prevention programs that address the underlying causes of suicide, violence, and overdose. Federal agencies such as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) use these insights to inform overdose prevention efforts, among other initiatives. Notably, more than 80 percent of the CDC's domestic

budget flows directly to states and communities, supporting locally driven solutions. ***We are deeply concerned with proposals to cut crucial primary prevention strategies within CDC and eliminate programs and surveillance already at work in communities across the country.*** As the United States grapples with rapidly evolving mental health and substance misuse crises, we urge you to protect the CDC's primary prevention funding lines.

CDC's critical work with school systems has been funded through two different Centers since the early 1990s. The school health funding line within the National Center for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and Tuberculosis Prevention was eliminated in the House FY 2026 LHHS appropriations bill. CDC's school health work (carried out through the Division of Adolescent and School Health) translates science into innovative programs and tools that protect youth and support a network of leaders in primary prevention. By funding local education agencies directly, these CDC-supported programs help children and adolescents avoid substance use, violence, and other experiences that could result in adverse health and educational outcomes.

This funding also supports the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), the largest public health surveillance system in the United States, and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), the largest youth health survey in the United States. The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System includes the YRBS and state, tribal, county, and local school health surveys, which provide important information about the health of youth across the country. Since the program's inception in 1991, more than five million students have engaged in over 2,300 surveys included in the YRBSS.¹

The federal government, states, localities, territories, and tribal entities rely upon the YRBSS to identify problems and track progress. Without YRBSS, we would lose the ability to identify emerging problems, including risk patterns related to suicide and self-harm. ***We respectfully request that you retain the CDC's School Health funding line, as included in the Senate FY 2026 LHHS appropriations bill.***

Additionally, CDC's National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) funding line within the Center for Injury Prevention and Control was eliminated in the House FY 2026 LHHS appropriations bill. NVDRS collects state-level information on violent deaths, including suicides. NVDRS is the only state-based surveillance system that pools more than 600 distinct data elements from multiple sources into an anonymous database.² These data provide context surrounding the deaths, including mental health conditions and treatment, life stressors, or physical health conditions. This information then helps to inform violence prevention strategies

¹ MMWR: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, 2023. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/su/pdfs/su7304-H.pdf>

² National Violent Death Reporting System. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2025. <https://www.cdc.gov/nvdrs/about/index.html>

in states and localities. ***We respectfully request that you retain the CDC's National Violent Death Reporting System funding line, as included in the Senate FY 2026 LHHS appropriations bill.***

The WBWG appreciates your efforts to appropriate funds to address the ongoing behavioral health challenges facing our country. As you finalize the FY 2026 LHHS appropriations legislation, we call on you to maintain critical primary prevention infrastructure to support and protect the mental health and well-being of all Americans.

Sincerely,

AFT: Education, Healthcare, Public Services
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Psychiatric Association
American School Health Association
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)
Committee for Children
Crisis Text Line
Futures Without Violence
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Hope Squad
Inseparable
Mental Health America
National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors (NACBHDD)
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Coalition of STD Directors
National Federation of Families
National League for Nursing
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
Partnership to End Addiction
Prevent Blindness
Prevent Child Abuse America
Prevention Institute
Psychotherapy Action Network (PsiAN)
Public Health Foundation

Sandy Hook Promise

Safe States Alliance

SHAPE America - Society of Health and Physical Educators

Society for Public Health Education

The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health/Got Transition

The Society of State Leaders of Health and Physical Education

Trust for America's Health