



Bipartisan Expanding Access to Mental Health Training Act

Introduced by Rep. Susie Lee (D-NV) and Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA)

The need:

- Our country, and the state of Nevada, has seen an **intensifying mental health crisis**, particularly following the isolation and stress of the COVID-19 pandemic—with a **disproportionate impact on our youth and schools**.
- Anxiety and depression have increased in prevalence by 25% globally, as people have struggled with loneliness, suffering, financial worries, and deaths of loved ones.¹
 - More than one-third of high school students experienced poor mental health during the pandemic, with as much as **20% demonstrating increased risk of suicidal or self-harming behaviors**.²
- Amid these mental health struggles, schools have reported **large upticks in verbal and physical abuse of both teachers and students, amid increased disorder in classrooms**.
 - Sixty percent of those working in education have experienced physical or verbal aggression from students during the pandemic, according to a recent survey.
 - In Nevada, the uptick in classroom disruptions and violent incidents has been particularly stark, with a **46% uptick in calls to the Clark County Police from schools reporting on-campus harassment, threats, or sexual assault**.³
 - According to most recent Department of Education statistics, the 2020-2021 school year saw the highest rate of school shootings in 20 years,⁴ while early reports for the 2021-2022 school year also showed alarmingly high rates.⁵
- Meanwhile, **40% of schools reported inadequate access to licensed mental health professionals** as a major limitation in supporting struggling students.⁶
 - Teachers across southern Nevada have repeatedly pointed to the shortage of mental health resources as central to their school's difficulties, which have contributed to far too many educators deciding to leave the profession in recent years.⁷
- While our students, families, educators, and first responders continue to wrestle with these troubling trends, it has never been more important to ensure that they have access to the support, training, and mental health resources necessary to keep every classroom safe and secure for teachers and students alike.

What this bill does:

- With this mental health and school safety crisis in mind, Rep. Lee is introducing the bipartisan *Expanding Access to Mental Health Training Act* to **provide substantial grant funding for improved training and coordination for teachers, first responders, and others to recognize and respond to youth behavioral health disorders**.
 - The bill would reauthorize and improve the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Mental Health Awareness Training (MHAT) Grants program, which will expire this year without congressional action.

- MHAT provides grant funding to states, localities, Tribes, and other nonprofits to train teachers, first responders, law enforcement officials, veterans, and others to help prevent mental and behavioral issues from escalating.
- The program helps **equip those working with struggling individuals with the resources they need to prevent mental health crises**, allowing them to connect those in need to proven, community-based mental health services.
- This bill would deliver a much-needed boost in resources to places like southern Nevada, while making important technical changes to MHAT to better support grantees in preventing suicide, evaluating and improving program effectiveness, and facilitating the sharing of information and best practices to get the most out of our federal dollars.
 - This legislation will go a long way in ensuring that our school personnel, first responders, and others on the frontlines of the mental health crisis are fully equipped to **support struggling youth and to intervene effectively to prevent violence inside and outside classrooms**.
- Senator Jacky Rosen (D-NV) and Senator Bill Cassidy, M.D. (R-LA) introduced the Senate companion to this bipartisan bill on June 23, 2022.

What School and Mental Health Stakeholders are Saying About This Bill:

- “The MHAT Grant has allowed us to offer free workshops and teach parents, mentors, teachers, coaches, health and human services workers, and other caring citizens how to help an adolescent who is experiencing a mental health or addictions challenge or is in crisis. The Children’s Cabinet supports, and urges, the reauthorization of the Mental Health Awareness Training Grants program as it provides critical training opportunities for people to be able to understand suicide and depression warning signs and make appropriate referrals. **Investments must be made in prevention and early intervention, MHAT Grants have the ability to educate, create awareness and save lives.**”
 - *Kim Young, CEO of The Children’s Cabinet*
- “Nye Communities Coalition appreciates [these] efforts and support for the Mental Health Awareness Training Grant. Nye Communities Coalition was a MHAT grantee when the pandemic started and this grant allowed us to ease the stress COVID put upon our community. **This bill will provide the resources that communities need to help our children, families, adults, and seniors manage their emotional and mental health.**”
 - *Stacy Smith, Nye Communities Coalition*
- “CSN's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) is a critical part of our students' support network and emotional safety net. CAPS works closely with students, faculty, and staff to put systems, programs, and policies in place to create a culture of caring that protects students' mental health and builds life skills, thus making it more likely for students to seek help and connect with CAPS promptly. **Receiving funds to provide Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training across the campus community has been impactful in changing behaviors—from a culture of silence to a culture of awareness.** The continual support of funds will allow us to create a culture of caring grounded in more profound understanding and reduced shame and secrecy by providing ongoing MHFA training.”
 - *Daniel Alvarado, Director of the Disability Resource Center, and CAPS, College of Southern Nevada*

For more information or to cosponsor or endorse this bill, please contact:

Bowen Peard, bowen.peard@mail.house.gov, in Congresswoman Susie Lee’s office.

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- ¹ <https://www.who.int/news/item/02-03-2022-covid-19-pandemic-triggers-25-increase-in-prevalence-of-anxiety-and-depression-worldwide>
 - ² <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/su/su7103a3.htm>
 - ³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/05/21/school-violence-las-vegas-teachers/>
 - ⁴ <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2022/2022092.pdf>
 - ⁵ <https://www.npr.org/2022/05/24/1101050970/2022-school-shootings-so-far>
 - ⁶ <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2022/2022092.pdf>
 - ⁷ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/05/21/school-violence-las-vegas-teachers/>