

Testimony of Congresswoman Grace F. Napolitano
RE: HR 1109 the Mental Health Services for Students Act
Subcommittee on Health
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Thursday, July 25, 2019

Chairwoman Eshoo and Ranking Member Burgess, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

It is vital that we pass my bill, HR 1109, the Mental Health Services for Students Act. In the Senate, Senator Tina Smith of Minnesota has a companion bill, S. 1122. Sixteen Members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee are currently co-sponsors of my bill: Cardenas, Barragan, Tonko, Clarke, Rush, Matsui, Castor, McNerney, Welch, Lujan, Kennedy, Dingell, Veasey, Kuster, Kelly, and Soto.

My bill would provide \$200 million per year for 5 years for 100 school-based mental health programs nationwide. It expands the scope of the Project Advancing Wellness and Resilience Education (AWARE) program by providing on-site licensed mental health professionals in schools across the country, and funding will be distributed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which will set guidelines and measure the outcomes of the funded programs.

Funding for this program would:

- Provide for comprehensive staff development for school and personnel working in schools
- Support and implements comprehensive culturally and linguistically appropriate services
- Deliver assistance to local communities in the development of policies to address child and adolescent trauma and mental health issues, and violence when and if it occurs
- Establish mechanisms for children and adolescents to report incidents of violence or plans by other children, adolescents, or adults to commit violence
- Promote positive mental health education and support for parents, siblings, and other family members of children with mental health disorders, as well as concerned members of the community

HR 1109 is supported by the Mental Health Liaison Group (which consists of 51 Mental Health Organizations), Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, National Education Association, and the American Federation of Teachers.

The bill is modeled off of a school-based mental health program Pacific Clinics and I started in 2001 with a half a million dollars in SAMSHA seed money. The program began in three middle schools and one high school and has since grown to thirty-five schools. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and the County Department of Mental Health have also been instrumental in the success of this program, taking over funding the program in 2009.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.