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To Whom It May Concern:

The Child Mind Institute strongly supports HR 1109, the Mental Health Services for Students Act.

This legislation, providing an avenue for schools across the country to expand comprehensive access to on-site mental health support for their students, addresses an area of enormous need for underserved communities. According to recent reports drawn from the National Center for Education Statistics, the average student-counselor ratio in the United States is 482 to 1. As it's estimated that 1 in 5 students may be struggling with a mental health or learning disorder, this means that school counselors are often attempting to serve the needs of approximately 100 students in need of mental health services. Legislation like HR 1109 will provide schools with a desperately needed additional layer of support via services with demonstrated effectiveness in reducing student's mental health symptoms and facilitating academic engagement.

At the Child Mind Institute, our Student Success Program provides services in school settings similar to those outlined in HR 1109. Having served more than 26,000 students, parents, and educators through our work in hundreds of schools across New York City, our comprehensive school-based interventions have led to significant decreases in students' symptoms of emotional distress, behavior problems, and post-traumatic stress, coupled with significant reductions in teacher ratings of their own stress levels. We have seen first-hand the transformative effects of programs like these: decreasing stigma related to mental health and learning disorders while also promoting and integrating resilience and social-emotional skill-building into school culture. Most importantly, these programs support students when they are at their most vulnerable, giving them the ability to remain academically engaged and perform to their potential.

At the Child Mind Institute, we applaud the work of Representatives Napolitano and Katko on HR 1109, and we stand with them in the effort to expand access to comprehensive and urgently needed mental health support services in school settings nationwide.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Planet
Executive Director