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June 29, 2020

The Honorable Grace F. Napolitano
Founder & Co-Chair, Congressional Mental Health Caucus
U.S. House of Representatives
1610 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Support H.R. 1109, Mental Health Services for Students Act of 2019

Dear Congresswoman Napolitano,

On behalf of the National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA), representing the interests of 50,000 Hispanic physicians in the United States committed to improve the health of Hispanics and other underserved, I am writing to strongly support ***H.R. 1109, Mental Health Services for Students Act of 2019***. In particular, we support that the bill that would enhance much needed mental health services for students, if needed to be a more productive, by doing the following:

- Provide comprehensive staff development for educators and community service personnel;
- Support and create services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate; and
- Assist local communities to develop policies to address the impact of trauma, including violence, on the mental health of children and adolescents;

This bill would address the critical need for mental health services in our communities. Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death for all ages in the United States and it serves as a major contributor to premature mortality since it ranks as second in age groups 10-14 and 15-19.¹ However, of 3.1 million adolescents aged 12 to 17 with a major depressive episode, only 1.2 million youths, or 41%, received treatment.² Additionally, 88% of Latino children and youth have “unmet mental health needs” compared to their African-American (77%) and White (76%) counterparts.³

Again, NHMA strongly supports H.R. 1109 and applauds your efforts because children deserve a healthy start in life. If you have any questions, please contact Ben Melano, Directors of Programs & Government Relations Officer at bmelano@nhmamd.org.

Sincerely,

Elena Rios, MD, MSPH, FACP
President & CEO
National Hispanic Medical Association

¹ CDC WISQARS. Ten Leading Causes of Death by Age Group, 1981-2018.

<https://webappa.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/leadcause.html>

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration. (2017). *Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-FFR1-2016/NSDUH-FFR1-2016.htm>

³ Interagency Working Group on Youth Groups. https://youth.gov/youth-topics/prevalence-mental-health-disorders-among-youth#_ftn