



May 29, 2019

The Honorable Grace Napolitano
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Napolitano:

On behalf of the 1.7 million members of the American Federation of Teachers, we are pleased to support H.R. 1109, the Mental Health Services for Students Act of 2019. In addition to educators, the AFT represents healthcare and law enforcement professionals, as well as other public employees; all of our members see the importance of establishing strong mental health supports. Your legislation will help ensure that students have access to mental health care services, which can make the difference between life and death, given that suicide is the third leading cause of death for youth ages 15-24.

The AFT is a strong and longtime supporter of the community school model, where wraparound services are provided to students, their families and neighbors within the school building. The Mental Health Services for Students Act fits this mold perfectly by allowing public schools to partner with local mental health professionals to establish on-site mental health care services for students. At a time when students face bullying, in multiple forms, and the stress of potential gun violence in and around schools, mental health services are crucial to both academic achievement and building mature well-rounded adults.

As with other forms of healthcare, too many students do not have access to mental health supports—indeed, 70 percent of adolescents with mental health problems do not receive care. Educators try their best to assist students with all of their needs, but our members need help in addressing students' emotional and psychological needs. The Mental Health Services for Students Act provides this assistance.

I thank you for introducing this important piece of legislation and look forward to working with you to support its passage.

Sincerely,

Randi Weingarten
President

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American Federation
of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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