

# Support Senate Mental Health bills to Improve Children's Mental Health

## S. 4747, the Investing in Kids' Mental Health Now Act S. 4472, the Health Care Capacity for Pediatric Mental Health Act

### Child and Adolescent Mental Health Is a National Emergency

- 1 in 5 children and adolescents experience a mental health condition each year. (Source: [CDC](#))
- 50% of mental illness begins by age 14. (Source: [SAMHSA](#))
- Emergency department visits for children's mental health more than doubled between 2016 and 2020. (Source: CHA PHIS Data)
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death in youth ages 10-24. (Source: [CDC](#))

Urgent action is needed to invest in the pediatric behavioral health workforce and expand care capacity to support children's mental and behavioral health needs. In many communities, there are too few options for children in need of mental health treatment and a limited workforce to provide services and too often children go without the necessary care, often resulting in more serious mental health conditions. As a result, children's hospitals are reporting significant increases in the number of children in crisis who are "[boarding](#)," or waiting in hospitals for appropriate care placements to become available. A comprehensive approach to pediatric mental health care must include supporting the pediatric behavioral health workforce, clinical and non-clinical health services and access to a full spectrum of care, including mental health promotion and prevention as well as early intervention and treatment, including under the Medicaid program. In order to serve our children in need, now and into the future, transformational actions must be taken now to strengthen access to mental health care for kids.

All too often, federal resources to address mental health do not make their way to children or the pediatric providers who serve them. S. 4472, the Health Care Capacity for Pediatric Mental Health Act and S. 4747, the Investing in Kids' Mental Health Now Act, put **kids first!** Purposefully designed to address children's unique needs, these bills include critical investments that will bolster the pediatric mental health workforce and improve the availability of a full continuum of care for kids.

### Investing in Kids' Mental Health Now Act (S. 4747) will

#### Strengthen support for pediatric mental health through Medicaid:

- Incentivizes states to increase Medicaid reimbursement for pediatric mental health services with 100% federal match, targeting support directly to providers enrolled in Medicaid and bolstering access for kids.
- Guide states toward best practices for improving access to a full continuum of mental, emotional and behavioral health services for children, including best practices for provider recruitment and retention, and improving access in underserved communities and for children with complex medical needs.

**Improve timely access to community-based care and telemental health services:**

- Share best practices on mental, emotional and behavioral telehealth services, including streamlining provider licensing, credentialing and enrollment with respect to services furnished across state lines, delivering audio-only services and expanding the originating site requirement.
- Guidance on best practices to ensure provider capacity to take care of children in crisis or in need of intensive mental, emotional or behavioral health services.
- Identify regulatory and legal barriers which inhibit providers' ability to increase care capacity and promote existing flexibilities states might use to expand pediatric mental health service availability.

**Health Care Capacity for Pediatric Mental Health Act (S. 4472) will**

establish three new grant programs at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) uniquely focused on urgent needs with pediatric mental and behavioral health care. Together these grants:

**Improve access to community-based services and support:**

- Strengthen community-based pediatric mental health services by enabling communities to implement or develop new programs and policies tailored to meet the mental and behavioral health needs of children.

**Support training to enhance the pediatric mental health workforce:**

- Bolster the capacity of the current pediatric health workforce through expanded mental and behavioral health training and support for pediatric mental health professionals.

**Invest in critical pediatric mental health infrastructure:**

- Expand and enhance critical pediatric mental health infrastructure to improve our national capacity to deliver appropriate care for children with more intensive treatment needs, including inpatient psychiatric care and step-down care, such as day programs or intensive outpatient services.

**For additional information, please contact [Elizabeth Brown](#), Vice President, Federal Affairs.**