



# ALEX PADILLA

U.S. SENATOR *for* CALIFORNIA

## Comprehensive Mental Health in Schools Pilot Program Act of 2021

**U.S. Senator Alex Padilla and U.S. Representative David Trone**

### The problem:

- The CDC reported that from March through October of 2020, the proportion of children between the ages of 5 and 11 visiting an emergency department because of a mental health crisis climbed 24 percent compared to the same time period in 2019, and climbed 31 percent for children between the ages of 12 and 17. More people are reporting frequent thoughts of suicide and self-harm than have ever been recorded.
- Experts agree that the full effects of increased learning loss, social isolation, uncertainty, and trauma may not manifest for years. Schools must be prepared to deal with this in a preventative, comprehensive, and long-term fashion.

### What the bill would do:

- Direct the Secretary of Education to establish a 4-year pilot grant program, authorized at \$20 million, prioritized to help schools predominantly serving low-income students address the mental and behavioral well-being of their students, as well as students' academic, cognitive, and social and emotional development, by:
  - Instituting multi-tier interventions to help educators address academic and behavioral needs and foster positive learning environments;
  - Using evidence-based materials and integrating social and emotional learning skills and competencies at school, including by providing professional development opportunities for school staff on integrating motivation, engagement, and resiliency training into classroom instruction; instituting racially, culturally, developmentally, and linguistically responsive teaching; providing agency to students; and understanding the impact of adverse childhood experiences on student health and development;
  - Ending punitive disciplinary practices by adopting restorative policies; and
  - Hiring more school-based mental and behavioral health professionals.

Endorsing organizations: *American Psychological Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, National Alliance on Mental Illness California, Committee for Children, Collaboration for Academic, Social & Emotional Learning, American Educational Research Association, National Association of School Psychologists, The National Association for Behavioral Intervention and Treat Assessment, Nemours Children's Health System, Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action, REDC Consortium, Sandy Hook Promise, and the Jed Foundation.*