

School Social Workers Improving Student Success Act

Sponsored by Congresswoman Gwen Moore & Congresswoman Barbara Lee

Endorsed by: American Federation of Teachers, National Association of Social Workers (NASW), School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA), Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare (AASWSW)

Our children are facing a mental health crisis. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 1 in 6 children have been diagnosed with a mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder with around 3 in 4 children aged 3-17 years old have been diagnosed with depression and anxiety.¹ However, fewer than 1 in 5 children in need of mental health services receive them.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated mental health trauma as school and homelife disruption has taken a psychological toll on adolescents who have felt isolated from their peers. A 2020 report by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), stated that over 4.1 million adolescents between the ages of 12-17 reported a major depressive episode but only 41.6 percent were able to receive treatment.²

Improving access to school-based mental health resources like school social workers is a critical way to uplift our struggling students. School-based mental health programs are critical to the early identification of mental health problems and provide unique community-based support that improves educational outcomes.

Bill Summary:

The School Social Workers Improving Student Success Act amends the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to establish a grant program to find additional school social workers and retain school social workers.

- Grants will be awarded to elementary and secondary schools to hire and retain the minimum ratio of one school social worker for every 250 students and one school social worker for every 50 students for high need areas
- Establishes the National Technical Assistance Center for School Social Work which would provide strategies on improving the effectiveness of school social work, identify areas of improvement for school social work programs, work with agencies on disseminating data on best practices, and establish school social work development programming.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/data.html>

² <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/major-depression>