

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 8, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chair  
Senate Labor, Health, and Human Services  
and Education Appropriations  
Subcommittee  
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Ranking Member  
Senate Labor, Health, and Human Services  
and Education Appropriations  
Subcommittee  
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Blunt,

As you consider the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2022, we request that you support two effective programs that help improve the health and well-being of American children. Specifically, we request that you provide robust funding for the Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Program, a federal telehealth initiative, which is particularly important for those in rural and underserved areas; and sustained funding for the Emergency Medical Services for Children program, which helps ensure that all children have access to pediatric-focused emergency health care. Both programs operate under the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and increased the need for reliable and accessible mental health services. Early intervention to address mental health needs is absolutely critical, especially for children. Trauma, depression, anxiety, and other conditions are only exacerbated when treatment is delayed or foregone altogether. Unfortunately, recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show that while nearly one in six U.S. children are diagnosed with a mental health disorder, only twenty percent of those with a mental health care need receive care from a specialized mental health care provider. In the last year we have seen a mental health crisis unfold among our children and youth, including youth suicide. We must provide greater access to mental health treatment, and bolster the support for pediatrician offices that are often on the frontline for initial interventions and mental health services.

We know there is a significant shortage of children's mental health providers, particularly in rural and underserved areas. This is where technology can play a role in bringing care to areas that need it most. The Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Program provides grants to integrate mental health services into pediatric primary care settings through telehealth. So far, grants have been awarded to 21 states across the country. Robust funding is critical to ensuring additional access points.

We also must continue to invest in emergency care for our children. According to the CDC, nearly 17 percent of children reported one or more visits to the emergency room in 2017. The Emergency Medical Services for Children program is the only federal grant program dedicated to improving the health outcomes of children in emergency departments. Children's medical needs are different from adults and require specialized training and equipment. This critical

program improves pediatric capacity within our emergency systems, ensuring that children receive the specialized care they need at the most critical moments.

Thank you for your work in supporting essential health programs, including those for our most vulnerable youth in rural and underserved parts of the country. We look forward to working with you and urge you to support the Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Program and the Emergency Medical Services for Children program.

Sincerely,



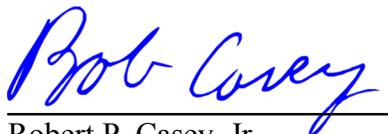
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Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator



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Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



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Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator



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Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator



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Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



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Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



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Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



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Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator



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Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator



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Kyrsten Sinema  
United States Senator



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Tina Smith  
United States Senator



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Jon Tester  
United States Senator



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Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator