

Dear Joint Committee on Student Success,

I wanted to voice how now more than ever an investment in education is a significant need. I have worked in the mental health field for over 15 years, the last two of which providing services within the school district. During this time, I have witnessed first-hand as well as seen the statistics that kids are struggling currently more than ever before as evidenced by factors such as growing child and adolescent suicide rates, volume of kids and families feeling traumatic experiences, and unprecedented number of children requiring specialized placements at school as they are not safe in the mainstream environment.

At schools we serve a uniquely important role as kids spend about half their day with us. Though things may be disruptive and unstable at home we have the opportunity to provide stability, care and safety in our buildings. It's through the relationships with educators that kids can begin to build alternative relationships and its secure relationships that are the biggest predictor of future success. With proper funding schools are able to meet and attend to all the various needs of kids, whether it be math, reading or social-emotional. Without it, school is at risk of becoming yet another unpredictable and unstable environment which will only perpetuate distress and poor mental health and education outcomes. Currently, we are doing some very powerful things in our schools around social-emotional support and are seeing historically struggling students turn things around and experience success, which I why I went into this work-to give kids a real chance at succeeding and having a different experience in life. I hope that you all will join us in the priceless investment in the welfare of our students.

Thank you for taking time to hear my thoughts!

Sincerely,

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