

The Congressional Black Caucus Emergency Taskforce on Black Youth Suicide and Mental Health: Pursuing Equity in Mental Health Act of 2019

Background:

When the Emergency Taskforce on Black Youth Suicide and Mental Health was founded earlier this year, it had three goals – educate Members of Congress and staff on the issue, raise awareness to the general public, and prepare a report. Thanks to the tremendous time, energy, and dedication of the Taskforce’s Working Group of experts, we have a document that can help guide us in developing the legislation needed to address this epidemic. The first piece of legislation that will come from this report is the following omnibus bill – The Pursuing Equity in Mental Health Act of 2019. This bill builds on existing proposed legislation and focuses on the need for culturally competent providers to address the lack of support for youth of color who are dealing with mental health issues.

Focus of the Pursuing Equity in Mental Health Act of 2019:

- **Provide Grants for Culturally Competent Mental Health Services:**
 - \$250 million to schools across the country so they can have more culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health services. Priority will be given to schools with higher levels of poverty, to reducing the ratio of counselors to students and to helping more students of color. These grants will also provide training for teachers and other school staff so they can better identify the signs of trauma, mental health disorders, and risk of suicide in all students.
 - \$20 million to establish interprofessional health care teams that can provide behavioral health care.
 - Awards grants to develop cultural competency educational curricula so students training to be social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, and therapists will be able to properly treat youth of color.
- **Increase Authorize Funding Levels for Research and Minority Fellowship Program:**
 - Authorizes \$650 million to the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) so that more research into addressing mental and physical health disparities can be conducted.
 - Authorizes an additional \$100 million to the National Institute of Health (NIH) that will be used to build relations with communities and provide research grants for clinical research so that more patient based research can be conducted.
 - Doubles the authorization of the Minority Fellowship Program (MFP) to \$25 Million to help more students of color become psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors, and therapists.
- **Direct Research and Resources at Federal Departments and Agencies:**
 - Directs the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to establish a Commission on the Effects of Smartphone and Social Media Usage on Adolescents.
 - Prohibits federal funds from being used for conversion therapy and prohibits SAMHSA grants from going to states that continue to allow such practices.

Contact:

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