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The EARLY Minds Act of 2025

U.S. Senators Alex Padilla, Thom Tillis, Tim Kaine, Lisa Murkowski

Early Intervention and Prevention are Critical to End the Youth Mental Health Crisis

Nearly 20% of children ages 3-17 in the United States have a mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral disorder. In the 10 years leading up to the pandemic, suicidal thoughts and behaviors, as well as feelings of persistent hopelessness, increased by 40% among young people. The pandemic further exacerbated these trends. On average, there is an 11-year delay between when someone starts experiencing a mental health condition and when they receive treatment. For a young person, that means suffering without help throughout their childhood before receiving treatment.

Research shows that intervening early with people who are experiencing mental health challenges can help prevent those challenges from turning more serious — and more costly to treat. Reviews by the National Institute of Mental Health have found that early intervention leads to greater improvements in symptoms, relationships, and quality of life, and higher engagement with schoolwork. States should have the flexibility to use up to 5% of Mental Health Block Grant funds for prevention and early intervention activities if they so choose. Without this adjustment, the Mental Health Block Grant is missing a valuable opportunity to intervene early and save lives.

The bipartisan Early Action and Responsiveness Lifts Youth (EARLY) Minds Act would help states proactively address mental health needs by:

1. Allowing states to use up to 5% of their Community Mental Health Services Block Grant funding for prevention and early intervention activities. *The Community Mental Health Services Block Grant, administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, is currently limited to funding services for those with severe, diagnosed mental illnesses.*
2. Requiring the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to provide reports to Congress detailing states' efforts to promote early intervention. HHS would report to Congress every two years regarding states' efforts to promote early intervention, including comprehensive information on activities undertaken and outcomes achieved.