

February 8, 2024

Honorable Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member of the Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Bill Cassidy
Ranking Member of the Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Cathy McMorris-Rogers
Chair, Energy and Commerce Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member, Energy and Commerce
Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Sanders, Ranking Member Cassidy, Chair McMorris Rogers and Ranking Member Pallone,

On behalf of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG), a coalition of national organizations representing consumers, families, mental health and addiction providers, advocates and other stakeholders committed to strengthening access to high-quality mental and behavioral health care, we write to urge you to include the bipartisan Kid Providing Resources for Optimal Outcomes Against Fatalities (Kid PROOF) Act, in the final reauthorization of the Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment (SUPPORT) for Patients and Communities Act. Kid PROOF will give parents needed support and save young lives from the tragedy of suicide and overdose.

The Kid PROOF Act is led by Senator Lujan (D-NM), Senator Rubio (R-FL), Representative Craig (D-MN), and Representative Tony Gonzales (R-TX).

Recent CDC data from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System shows an alarming increase in high school students who report having persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness, poor mental health, and serious thoughts of suicide.¹ Additionally, the rate of overdose deaths among U.S. teenagers nearly doubled in 2020 and continued to rise by another 20 percent in the first half of 2021 compared with the 10 years before the pandemic.² We must act now to address these alarming statistics and support parents everywhere in need of solutions for their children.

Kid PROOF will provide grants for states to partner with health care providers through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to provide supplies to parents, with their consent, when a child is at risk of suicide or overdose. This is an evidence-based approach to put away dangerous items when a child is considering suicide or overdose, for example, medications such as opioids. The Kid PROOF Act will provide parents with immediate support to help their child avoid making a tragic decision.³

¹ "Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, April 27, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrebs/index.htm>.

² Shover, Chelsea, Helena Hansen, David Schringer, Morgan Godvin, and Joseph Gone. "Adolescent Drug Overdose Deaths Rose Exponentially for the First Time in History during the Covid Pandemic." UCLA Health, April 12, 2022.

Evidence has shown that 95 percent of individuals do not go on to die by suicide when items are stored and 90 percent of parents will utilize supplies when given to them.^{4,5} The use of supplies to store opioids and items dangerous to children is encouraged by national groups including the American Medical Association, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, and the American Academy of Family Physicians.^{6,7} **Kid PROOF is the solution to help keep kids safe from suicide and overdose.**

We applaud the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pension Committee (HELP) for working in a bipartisan manner to include the Kid PROOF Act in the reauthorization of the SUPPORT Act that passed out of Committee in December of 2023. We urge you to ensure that Kid PROOF is included in the final reauthorization of the SUPPORT Act. The Kid PROOF Act will protect the most vulnerable in our society as providers, parents, and communities continue to respond to the youth mental health and substance use disorder crisis.

Thank you for your consideration of this effort. We stand ready to respond to any questions on this matter.

Sincerely,

American Art Therapy Association
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association of Psychiatric Pharmacists
American Counseling Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Children's Hospital Association
Crisis Text Line
Employee Assistance Professionals Association
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health & Social Justice
International Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Foundation
Inseparable
Mental Health America
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors (NACBHDD)
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Rural Mental Health
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Board for Certified Counselors
National Council for Mental Wellbeing
National Eating Disorders Association
National Federation of Families

National League for Nursing
Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health
Psychotherapy Action Network
REDC Consortium
Sandy Hook Promise
Schizophrenia & Psychosis Action Alliance
SMART Recovery
The Jed Foundation
The Kennedy Forum
The National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
The Trevor Project
Trust for America's Health
Vibrant Emotional Health

³ Labouliere CD, Vasan P, Kramer A, Brown G, Green K, Rahman M, Kammer J, Finnerty M, Stanley B. "Zero Suicide" - A model for reducing suicide in United States behavioral healthcare. *Suicidologi*. 2018;23(1):22-30. PMID: 29970972; PMCID: PMC6022755.

⁴ Pirkis, Jane, Lay San Too, Matthew J Spittal, Karolina Krysinska, Jo Robinson, and Yee Tak Cheung. "Interventions to Reduce Suicides at Suicide Hotspots: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis." *The Lancet Psychiatry* 2, no. 11 (November 2, 2015): 994–1001. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s2215-0366\(15\)00266-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2215-0366(15)00266-7).

⁵ Webb, A. C., Nichols, M. H., Shah, N., & Monroe, K. W. (2020). Effect of lock boxes and education on safe storage of medications. *Injury epidemiology*, 7(Suppl 1), 21. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40621-020-00257-y>

⁶ Robeznieks, Andis. "5 Tips for Safely Storing Opioids at Home." American Medical Association, September 6, 2018. <https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/overdose-epidemic/5-tips-safely-storing-opioids-home>.

⁷ Devitt, Michael. "Up and Away Offers Tips to Keep Kids Safe from Medications." AAFP, March 19, 2018. <https://www.aafp.org/news/health-of-the-public/20180319upandaway.html>.