



April 28, 2025

Chairman Robert Aderholt  
House Labor-HHS Subcommittee  
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro  
House Labor-HHS Subcommittee  
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Chair Shelley Moore Capito  
Senate Labor-HHS Subcommittee  
Room S-128, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Tammy Baldwin  
Senate Labor-HHS Subcommittee  
Room S-128, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chair Moore Capito, and Ranking Member Baldwin:

On behalf of the American Council on Education (ACE) and the undersigned organizations, we write to urge you to support an increase in funding and broadening the utilization of the Garrett Lee Smith (GLS) Campus Suicide Prevention Grant Program in FY 2026. This program is helpful in providing mental health and substance use prevention and intervention services for college students.

The mental health of college and university students continues to be an enormous challenge on campuses across the country. College students are reporting mental health challenges at a growing and alarming rate.<sup>1</sup> Over a third of students have screened positive for depression, an increase from recent years and at a level that disproportionately impacts marginalized communities.<sup>2</sup> For traditional college-aged students, many arrive on campus already struggling with mental health challenges. A 2022 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report found that more than 44 percent of high school students reported that they struggle with persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness.<sup>3</sup>

While mental health concerns are impacting communities across the country,<sup>4</sup> college students face a unique set of obstacles and challenges that affect their academic success and completion. According to a recent national survey,<sup>5</sup> well over half of current college

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/What-Works-Mental-Health.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [https://healthymindsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/HMS\\_national\\_report\\_090924.pdf](https://healthymindsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/HMS_national_report_090924.pdf);  
[https://healthymindsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/HMS\\_national\\_report\\_090924.pdf](https://healthymindsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/HMS_national_report_090924.pdf);

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0165032722002774?via%3Dihub>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/su/pdfs/su7103a1-a5-H.pdf>, pp. 16, 19.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>;

<https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-youth-mental-health-advisory.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gallup.com/analytics/468986/state-of-higher-education.aspx>

students (64 percent) who have considered leaving college, often referred to as “stopping out,” cite emotional stress and mental health concerns as the primary driver. The same report also found students of color and students seeking associate degrees are disproportionately considering stopping out. In addition, three in five students report experiencing food insecurity, housing insecurity, or homelessness, which are associated with higher levels of anxiety and depression.<sup>6</sup> Close to half (47 percent) of college students are struggling with clinically significant anxiety or depression, but less than half of these students had mental health counseling and/or therapy in the past year.<sup>7</sup> Colleges and universities lack the resources to meet the surging demand for mental health services.

While federal investments supporting mental health needs in our nation’s K-12 schools have increased in recent years, college students have not had the same support. The GLS Campus Suicide Prevention Grant Program, administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), is currently the only dedicated federal program addressing college student mental health. First authorized in 2004, the funding allows colleges and universities to expand services that support students at risk of suicide and suicide attempts, including those experiencing substance use disorder and mental health concerns. In its most recent cycle, the program awarded just \$2.3 million to only 25 institutions—providing a maximum of \$102,000 per grantee. This funding level is far from sufficient given the scale of need.<sup>8</sup>

Congress should consider increasing investments to address college student mental health by increasing GLS Campus Suicide Prevention Grant Program funding by \$5 million for a total of \$12 million in FY 2026, which would allow for more campuses to access these critical funds. We also urge your support for continuing SAMHSA’s waiver of matching funds for minority serving institutions and community colleges, as announced in the 2024 funding notice—a recognition of the importance of addressing mental health and preventing suicide at traditionally under-resourced institutions of higher education.

Over the years, the GLS Campus Suicide Prevention Grant Program has been important for many institutions and potentially lifesaving for the thousands of students who have benefited from grant-funded initiatives. Expanding this program would allow more institutions to deliver the support their students urgently need.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://hope.temple.edu/research/hope-center-basic-needs-survey/preview-2023-24-student-basic-needs-survey>;  
<https://journals.flvc.org/jpss/article/view/130999>

<sup>7</sup> [https://healthymindsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/HMS\\_national\\_report\\_090924.pdf](https://healthymindsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/HMS_national_report_090924.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.samhsa.gov/grants/grants-dashboard?1=by\\_nofono\\_number%3ASM-22-004&f%5B0%5D=by\\_award\\_fy%3A2024&f%5B1%5D=by\\_nofono\\_number%3ASM-22-004&grants\\_dashboard\\_search=&order=field\\_grant\\_awarded\\_year&sort=desc](https://www.samhsa.gov/grants/grants-dashboard?1=by_nofono_number%3ASM-22-004&f%5B0%5D=by_award_fy%3A2024&f%5B1%5D=by_nofono_number%3ASM-22-004&grants_dashboard_search=&order=field_grant_awarded_year&sort=desc)

Thank you for your leadership and for your attention to this critical issue. We welcome the opportunity to further engage with you in ways to strengthen federal support to address college student mental health.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ted Mitchell". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ted Mitchell  
President

On behalf of:

Active Minds

American Association of State Colleges and Universities

American College Health Association

American Council on Education

American Psychological Association

Healthy Minds Network

The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs

The Jed Foundation

Today's Students Coalition