

December 10, 2024

The Honorable Bernie Sanders  
Chairman, Committee on Health, Education,  
Labor, and Pensions  
United States Senate

The Honorable Bill Cassidy  
Ranking Member, Committee on Health,  
Education, Labor, and Pensions  
United States Senate

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Chairwoman, Committee on Energy and  
Commerce  
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Frank Pallone  
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and  
Commerce  
United States House of Representatives

**Subject: Inclusion of Peer-to-Peer Mental Health Provision in Final SUPPORT Package**

Dear Chairman Sanders, Chairwoman McMorris Rodgers, and Ranking Members Cassidy and Pallone,

On behalf of 30 organizations representing consumers, mental health and addiction providers, youth advocates, and other stakeholders committed to bipartisan solutions to prevent, treat, and promote recovery from substance use and mental health conditions, we write to urge the House Energy and Commerce and Senate HELP Committees to include the HELP-passed provisions from the bipartisan **Peer-to-Peer Mental Health Support Act** ([S.3453/H.R.9684](#)), led by Senators Hickenlooper and Murkowski, Senator-elect Curtis, and Representative Beyer, within the negotiated *Substance Use Disorder Prevention That Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment for Patients and Communities Act* (SUPPORT Act) Reauthorization in the Continuing Resolution. This vital, no-cost provision would simply add non-clinical youth peer support in schools as an eligible use of existing SUPPORT-authorized funds. By addressing the substance use and mental health issues affecting young people before they become crises, Congress can limit spending and save lives.

When the [CDC surveyed youth in 2023](#), 12% of high school students had ever used an illicit drug or prescription opioid, and 40% of high school students experienced persistent sadness or hopelessness. Especially for young people, substance use and mental health are intertwined: with [up to 50%](#) of individuals with substance use disorders also experiencing a co-occurring mental health condition. We further know when students need help, they are [more likely](#) to turn to a peer than an adult or an authority figure. In a [Mental Health America 2020 survey](#), 44% of high school-aged youth desired access to support from other young people. But when youth turn to friends, those peers report not having the knowledge or tools to respond.

The Peer-to-Peer Mental Health Support Act would allow youth peer support programs to be eligible for funding under an existing SUPPORT Act program, correcting an oversight that has left young people behind. By integrating student-focused and student-led mental health initiatives into schools and prioritizing collaboration with mental health professionals, we can foster protective factors and literacy essential for student health, well-being, and success.

We applaud the hard work of both chambers in moving the SUPPORT Act reauthorization forward. As you work to negotiate the package for inclusion in a Continuing Resolution, we strongly urge the inclusion of the Peer-to-Peer Mental Health Support Act, which HELP passed as [Sec. 215](#). Please

reach out to Maddie Geschu at [maddie.geschu@centerroadsolutions.com](mailto:maddie.geschu@centerroadsolutions.com) or Caren Howard at [choward@mhanational.org](mailto:choward@mhanational.org) if we can provide further insights or assistance as you continue this important work.

Sincerely,

Active Minds

Mental Health America

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Clinical Social Work Association

Crisis Text Line

Depression Bipolar Support Alliance

Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy, & Action

First Focus Campaign for Children

Inseparable

Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners

National Association of Peer Supporters

National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors

National Board for Certified Counselors

National Collaborative for Transformative Youth Policy

National Eating Disorders Association

National League for Nursing

Nava Behavioral Health

Painted Brain

Sandy Hook Promise

SIN Boundaries ARTWORK

Students Engaged in Advancing Texas (SEAT)

The Defensive Line

The Kennedy Forum

Treatment Communities of America

Youth MOVE National

*CC: Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, Speaker Mike Johnson, and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries*