

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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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 temporarily 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.<sup>3</sup>

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

<sup>2</sup> 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. <https://www.uclahealth.org/news/adolescent-drug-overdose-deaths-rose-exponentially-first>.

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.<sup>4,5</sup> 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.<sup>6,7</sup> **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  
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

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<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Pirkis, Jane, Lay San Too, Matthew J Spittal, Karolina Kryszynska, 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).

<sup>5</sup> 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>

<sup>6</sup> 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>.

<sup>7</sup> 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>.