

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 26, 2026

The Honorable Linda McMahon
Secretary
United States Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue Southwest
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary McMahon:

We write to request immediate clarification regarding the Department of Education's (the Department) termination of \$1 billion in School-Based Mental Health Services Grant (SBMH) and Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant (MHSP) programs. The Department's recent actions create significant operational uncertainty for local school districts, interrupting student access to care and stalling the recruitment of future school-based mental health care professionals. These choices will increase the financial and administrative barriers to obtaining a quality education. We therefore demand that the Department disburse the funds grantees are contractually owed in a timely manner to ensure local school programs face no further disruption.

Funded by the *Bipartisan Safer Communities Act*, the SBMH and MHSP programs address the dire shortage of mental health service providers in our nation's schools. More than half of schools in the nation reported their ability to provide mental health services to students was limited in a significant way by inadequate funding, while 40 percent described insufficient access to mental health professionals as a barrier.¹ SBMH grants help schools hire and retain counselors, psychologists, and other mental health professionals, specifically targeting areas with a demonstrated need, like rural and low-income communities. MHSP grants enable institutions of higher education and school districts to enter partnerships to recruit and train mental health professionals to work in schools.

The efficacy of SBMH and MHSP is supported by clear performance metrics. In just one year, grantees reached nearly 775,000 K-12 students nationwide, reduced absenteeism and behavioral issues, lowered suicide risk, trained and hired nearly 1,300 mental health professionals, and retained a vast majority of new and existing mental health professionals.²

These programs fill crucial gaps in mental health care for youth in our nation's schools. A 2023 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention survey found that 40 percent of high school students reported feeling sad or hopeless, an increase from 30 percent in 2013.³ Twenty-nine percent of

¹ *Student Mental Health and Education Fact Sheet*, LEARNING POLICY INSTITUTE (July 9, 2025), <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/student-mental-health-education-factsheet>

² NAT'L ASS'N OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS, *THE IMPACT OF FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES 2* (2025).

³ CTR. FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION, U.S. DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERV., *YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY: DATA SUMMARY & TRENDS REPORT: 2013-2023 59* (2024).

high school students reported experiencing poor mental health and nine percent shared that they had attempted suicide.⁴

Despite these grants' clear effectiveness, the Department sent boilerplate notices in April 2025 to 70 SBMH and 153 MHSP recipients claiming that these grantees did not adhere to the Trump Administration's priorities and policy preferences. The notices failed to provide specific, individualized explanations for why the grants were abruptly discontinued.

Consequently, grantees were forced to pause hiring and training and lay off school counselors, psychologists, and social workers. MHSP-supported graduate programs could also no longer fund the scholarships needed to recruit students.

In June 2025, 16 states, home to 140 of the canceled grants, sued the Department, arguing that the discontinuation of the grants violated the Administrative Procedure Act (APA). A district court subsequently issued a preliminary injunction against the discontinuation and then granted summary judgment and a permanent injunction to the plaintiff states, finding that the Department's actions were inconsistent with statutory requirements. The U.S. Court of Appeals for Ninth Circuit denied the Department's request to stay the permanent injunction.

The Department resumed 122 of the grants through June 30, 2026, imposing additional reporting requirements before deciding whether to release funding for the second half of the year. This process caused serious administrative uncertainty because grantee organizations could not reliably and effectively project budgets to determine if they would have the funds to hire and train mental health professionals. Some grantees were forced to lay off employees, exacerbating the challenges they face in addressing student mental health.

Furthermore, the Administration has indicated plans to permanently discontinue these grants,⁵ raising serious concerns regarding compliance with standing federal permanent injunctions and the July 27, 2026, Temporary Restraining Order.

The Department's decision to withhold this funding from our nation's schools will reverberate as the new school year starts in the fall, and the harm will be exacerbated if the Department continues to disrupt or withhold SBMH and MHSP funding. Our nation's schools are already facing significant barriers to retaining mental health professionals, who serve as trusted adults for students and their parents. These interruptions in student services disrupt the continuity of care. The Department's actions will also slow the recruitment of new mental health professionals, disincentivizing prospective counselors and therapists from serving in our nation's schools.

In light of the Department's actions, we request answers to the following questions by September 18, 2026:

⁴ *Id.* at 61.

⁵ *See, e.g.*, Complaint at 17, *Washington v. U.S. Dept. of Educ.*, Case No. 2:26-cv-02409-TMC (W.D. Wash. July 10, 2026) (indicating Dept. of Educ. staff discontinued around 140 grants following a policy change.)

1. How many grantees have received an additional six months of funding after June 30, 2026? Please provide a list containing the name, a description of the grant, the amount, and any associated reporting requirements for each grantee.
2. Will the Department continue to impose similar requirements on these grantees for the remainder of their grant period?
3. What objective evaluation criteria were used to determine program compliance? Please provide a written justification for each discontinued grant including grant-specific reasons that go beyond the generic justification currently offered in the notices.
4. How does the Department plan to address the interruptions and uncertainty for grantees caused by the discontinuations?

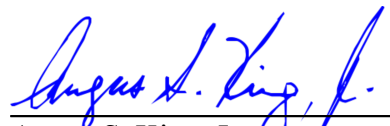
We insist that the Department honor the statutory funding directives enacted by Congress, resolve the administrative barriers affecting the pipeline of mental health professionals in our nation's schools, and ensure that students have access to these crucial services. To cut, delay, and otherwise obstruct these grants is not only unlawful, but also unconscionable in light of the mental health crisis facing our youth. It's not an exaggeration to say that young lives are at stake. Please step in to help.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



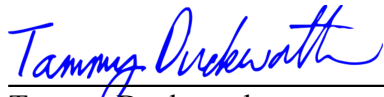
Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



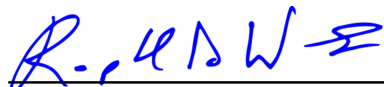
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



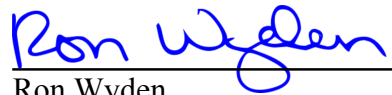
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator