

Contact:

Sara Brown

Associate Director of Communications

SBrown@eliotchs.org

978-886-9284

State Legislators, Advocates to Hold Press Conference in Support of Legislation to develop comprehensive school-based behavioral health systems in every school district

Boston, MA - On Monday, Nov. 6th, children's mental health advocates are headed to Beacon Hill to testify in support of a bill that would require every school district in the Commonwealth to develop and implement a comprehensive school-based behavioral health (CSBBH) system within three years before the joint committee on Mental Health, Substance Use, and Recovery.

An act establishing a child and adolescent behavioral health implementation coordinating council (Bill H.1979), filed by Rep. Marjorie Decker, focuses on ensuring all of the Commonwealth's children can access appropriate and timely behavioral healthcare. The hearing will be held in hearing room A-1 at 1 PM.

The Children's Mental Health Campaign will be hosting a legislative hearing before the hearing in support of the bill. It will be held in room 350 at 11 AM.

This bill would introduce the development of a School-Based Behavioral Health Implementation Coordinating Council, consisting of The Department of Mental Health, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Behavioral Health for Integrated Resources For Children Project at Umass Boston. This council will help and support every school district develop a plan for the rapid statewide implementation of CSBBH to provide equitable access to behavioral health promotion, prevention, and intervention services.

"Since all children need to attend schools, schools are the ideal place to ensure all children have equitable access to behavioral health supports," said Nancy Allen Scannell, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. "There has never been a more urgent time than now to make a deep investment in the well-being of children, and this bill provides the structure for doing so."

The Children's Mental Health Campaign acknowledges the stress families are currently under during this mental health crisis and believes this bill is the first step in meeting their needs.

"The pandemic has exacerbated existing conditions and created new stressors not only for our children but parents, families, and teachers as well," said Pam Sager, Executive Director of the Parent/Professional Advocacy League. "This bill will not only help our children but provide support our families deserve."

"When services are not in place and easy to access, it can create a costly problem. Delays in access to support can exacerbate existing needs, increase family stress, and lead to the need for more costly intervention," said Marisol Garcia, Executive Director of Health Law Advocates. "We are in a mental health crisis, and to not act now puts a whole generation of children at risk."

This legislation is urgently needed to address the historic uneven distribution of resources across districts. Some schools are able to provide comprehensive support, while others struggle to find resources to meet their student's mental wellness needs. The Campaign recognizes that schools can't do this on their own, and we are committed to ongoing advocacy to ensure that there are funds in place to support all districts, especially those that are historically under-resourced, in implementing comprehensive school behavioral health.

About Children's Mental Health Campaign

The Children's Mental Health Campaign (CMHC) Executive Committee consists of six highly reputable partner organizations: The Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Boston Children's Hospital, the Parent/Professional Advocacy League, Health Care for All, Health Law Advocates, and the Massachusetts Association for Mental Health. Collectively, we advocate for policy, systems, and practice solutions to ensure all children in Massachusetts have access to resources to prevent, diagnose, and treat mental health issues in a timely, effective, and compassionate way.

###