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June 29, 2020

Committee on Energy & Commerce
Subcommittee on Health
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of our 3 million members and the 50 million students they serve, we would like to submit for the record the following comments in connection with tomorrow's hearing, "High Anxiety and Stress: Legislation to Improve Mental Health During Crisis."

Mental health experts agree that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased stress among students at all levels, as well as among educators struggling to be there for their students while coping with challenges of their own. Now is the time to strengthen and expand supports for students and educators alike, especially mental health services that are already in short supply.

NEA supports the Mental Health Services for Students Act of 2019 (H.R. 1109), which would expand access to school-based comprehensive mental health programs nationwide. In particular, we are pleased that the bill would:

- Provide on-site behavioral health services for K-12 students at no charge to them or their families
- Provide for comprehensive professional development for educators and other school staff
- Support and implement services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate
- Help local communities develop policies to address the impact of trauma, including violence, on the mental health of children and adolescents

Even before COVID-19, mental health disorders were rising among American youth. The [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#) reports that 1 in 6 U.S. children age 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year and that 50 percent of all lifetime mental illness begins by age 14. Yet only half of U.S. youth age 6-17 with a mental health disorder received treatment in 2016.

NEA stands ready to work with Congress to increase access to school-based mental health care, including by enacting H.R. 1109. We thank the Committee for the opportunity to submit these comments.

Sincerely,

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association