

February 4, 2022

Dear House Budget Leads:

The undersigned organizations would like to respectfully request an increase of \$914,000 annually in ongoing funding be provided to expand the school-based health center program with a goal of supporting access to behavioral healthcare in academic settings.

Our children and youth are in the midst of a mental and behavioral health crisis as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Adolescents and transition-age youth (under age 24) in Washington state faced significant behavioral health challenges, even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The 2018 Healthy Youth Survey showed that more than 60% of students were experiencing significant anxiety and 40% of students were experiencing depression.
- Death by suicide among adolescents and transition-age youth is rising across Washington state.

School-based health care—alongside the important services provided by school nurses, psychologists, social workers, and counselors—is crucial to supporting our youth’s behavioral health, particularly for our most underserved students with significant barriers to care in the community.

A school-based health center (SBHC) is a student-focused health center located in or adjacent to a school where students can receive integrated medical, behavioral health and other healthcare services. Studies have shown that students are 10-20x more likely to access behavioral health care if they have a school-based health center in their school.

In 2021, the legislature passed HB 1225 that creates a state program office for SBHCs at the Department of Health and established a grant program. Since the passage of the legislation, interest in SBHCs has grown significantly and we expect the need to far outweigh available funding.

**We ask the legislature to provide an additional \$914,000 annually in ongoing state funding in the 2022 supplemental operating budget for school-based health centers to support access to integrated behavioral health care in academic settings.** This funding request includes \$814,000 annually in ongoing funding for SBHC grants, and \$100,000 annually in ongoing funding for training and technical assistance for SBHCs.

This funding request was included as part of the Department of Health (DOH) [decision package in support of Young Adult Behavioral Health](#). This strategy is also [supported in the 2022 recommendations of the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Work Group](#).

Thank you for considering this request.

Signed,

*Alliance for Gun Responsibility  
American Heart Association  
Arcora Foundation  
Bethel School District  
Better Health Together  
Building Changes  
Capitol Hill EcoDistrict  
Center for Children & Youth Justice  
Children's Alliance  
Communities In Schools of Washington  
State Network  
Community Health Care  
Community Health Center of Snohomish  
County  
Community Health of Central  
Washington  
Coordinated Care  
Country Doctor Community Health  
Centers  
Edmonds School District  
Excelsior Family Medicine  
Excelsior Wellness  
Foundation for Healthy Generations  
HealthPoint  
International Community Health Services  
Jefferson County Public Health  
Justice for Girls Coalition of Washington  
State  
Kaiser Permanente  
King County  
League of Education Voters  
Lummi Tribal Health Center  
MultiCare Health System  
NAMI Washington  
NEW Health  
Newport School District  
Northwest Health Law Advocates*

*Peninsula Community Health Services  
Planned Parenthood Alliance Advocates  
– Washington  
Puyallup School District  
Quincy School District  
School Nurse Organization of  
Washington  
Spokane Public Schools  
Tacoma-Pierce County Health  
Department  
The Health Center  
The National Service Office for Nurse-  
Family Partnership & Child First  
TOGETHER!  
Tubman Center for Health & Freedom  
UnitedHealth Group  
Washington Association for Community  
Health  
Washington Association of Educational  
Service Districts  
Washington Association of School  
Administrators  
Washington Association of School Social  
Workers  
Washington Bikes  
Washington Chapter of the American  
Academy of Pediatrics  
Washington Education Association  
Washington School-Based Health  
Alliance  
Washington State Becca Task Force  
Washington State Medical Association  
Washington State Parent Teacher  
Association  
Washington State School Directors'  
Association*