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