

December 8, 2023

Honorable Bernie Sanders  
Chair of the Health, Education, Labor, and  
Pensions Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Bill Cassidy  
Ranking Member of the Health, Education,  
Labor, and Pensions Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Sanders and Ranking Member Cassidy,

On behalf of the 29 organizations, who are committed to improving the mental health and wellbeing of all Americans and addressing the current youth mental health and substance use disorder crisis, we write to urge you to include the bipartisan Kid Providing Resources for Optimal Outcomes Against Fatalities Act (Kid PROOF) of 2023/S. 3364 in the reauthorization of the Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment (SUPPORT) for Patients and Communities Act led by Senators Lujan (D-NM) and Rubio (R-FL). This bill will give parents the support they need and most importantly save lives from the tragedy of suicide and overdose.

Recent CDC data from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System shows an alarming increase in high school students who report having persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness, poor mental health, and having seriously considered attempting suicide.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the rate of overdose deaths among U.S. teenagers nearly doubled in 2020 and continued to rise by another 20 percent in the first half of 2021 compared with the 10 years before the pandemic.<sup>2</sup> We must act now to address these alarming statistics and support parents in rural, urban, and suburban areas in need of solutions for their children.

The Kid PROOF Act would allow health care providers to receive grants within the existing Youth Prevention and Recovery Program to provide lethal means safety supplies to parents, with their consent, when a child is at risk of suicide or overdose. Lethal means safety is an evidence-based approach that focuses on temporarily securing lethal means when a child is considering suicide or overdose—for example, medications including opioids. The Kid PROOF Act will provide parents with immediate support to help their child not make a tragic decision.<sup>3</sup> Evidence has shown that 95 percent of individuals do not go on to die by suicide when items are temporarily stored and 90 percent of parents will utilize supplies when given to them.<sup>4,5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS).” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, April 27, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/index.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Shover, Chelsea, Helena Hansen, David Schringer, Morgan Godvin, and Joseph Gone. “Adolescent Drug Overdose Deaths Rose Exponentially for the First Time in History during the Covid Pandemic.” UCLA Health, April 12, 2022. <https://www.uclahealth.org/news/adolescent-drug-overdose-deaths-rose-exponentially-first>.

<sup>3</sup> Labouliere CD, Vasan P, Kramer A, Brown G, Green K, Rahman M, Kammer J, Finnerty M, Stanley B. “Zero Suicide” - A model for reducing suicide in United States behavioral healthcare. *Suicidologi*. 2018;23(1):22-30. PMID: 29970972; PMCID: PMC6022755.

<sup>4</sup> Pirkis, Jane, Lay San Too, Matthew J Spittal, Karolina Krysinska, Jo Robinson, and Yee Tak Cheung. “Interventions to Reduce Suicides at Suicide Hotspots: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis.” *The Lancet Psychiatry* 2, no. 11 (November 2, 2015): 994–1001. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s2215-0366\(15\)00266-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2215-0366(15)00266-7).

<sup>5</sup> Webb, A. C., Nichols, M. H., Shah, N., & Monroe, K. W. (2020). Effect of lock boxes and education on safe storage of medications. *Injury epidemiology*, 7(Suppl 1), 21. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40621-020-00257-y>

Research has shown that the first 72 hours when someone is ideating are critical to preventing them from dying by suicide. Too many youth and adults are unaware of the warning signs to look for and how to properly intervene before a tragedy can occur. The Kid PROOF Act will provide parents with prompt support from a health care provider to help protect their child from a tragic decision.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, practicing lethal means safety of opioids and items lethal to children is encouraged by national groups including the American Medical Association, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, and the American Academy of Family Physicians.<sup>7, 8</sup> **The Kid PROOF Act is the solution to strengthen the existing Youth Prevention and Recovery Program and to help keep kids safe from suicide and overdose.**

As we move towards the reauthorization of the SUPPORT Act, we must continue to strengthen and update programs to respond to the current mental health and substance use needs of our country. The Kid PROOF Act will protect the most vulnerable in our society as providers, parents, and communities respond to the youth mental health and substance use disorder crisis. Thank you for your consideration of this effort. We stand ready to respond to any questions on this matter.

Sincerely,

Active Minds

American Counseling Association

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

American Mental Health Counselors Association

American Psychiatric Association

American Psychological Association

Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare

BALANCE eating disorder treatment center

Center for Change

Centerstone

Children's Hospital Association

Children's Minnesota

Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy, & Action

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<sup>6</sup> Labouliere CD, Vasan P, Kramer A, Brown G, Green K, Rahman M, Kammer J, Finnerty M, Stanley B. "Zero Suicide" - A model for reducing suicide in United States behavioral healthcare. *Suicidologi*. 2018;23(1):22-30. PMID: 29970972; PMCID: PMC6022755.

<sup>7</sup> Robeznieks, Andis. "5 Tips for Safely Storing Opioids at Home." American Medical Association, September 6, 2018. <https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/overdose-epidemic/5-tips-safely-storing-opioids-home>.

<sup>8</sup> Devitt, Michael. "Up and Away Offers Tips to Keep Kids Safe from Medications." AAFP, March 19, 2018. <https://www.aafp.org/news/health-of-the-public/20180319upandaway.html>.

Fairview Health Services

Hennepin Healthcare System

IFEDD, The International Federation of Eating Disorder Dietitians

Inseparable

Mental Health America

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

National Council for Mental Wellbeing

National Federation of Families

REDC Consortium

Sandy Hook Promise

Save the Children

Schizophrenia & Psychosis Action Alliance

SunCloud Health

The Kennedy Forum

The Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health

The Trevor Project