



March 31, 2026

The Honorable Robert Aderholt  
U.S. House Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS  
272 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
U.S. House Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS  
2413 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito  
U.S. Senate Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS  
170 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin  
U.S. Senate Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS  
141 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Aderholt, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chair Moore Capito, and Ranking Member Baldwin:

On behalf of the American Council on Education (ACE) and the undersigned organizations, we write to urge you to support an increase in funding for the Garrett Lee Smith (GLS) Campus Suicide Prevention Grant Program in FY 2027 appropriations. This program helps to provide mental health and substance use prevention and intervention services for students in higher education.

Addressing the mental health of college and university students continues to be an enormous effort for campuses across the country. College students are reporting mental health challenges at alarming rates.<sup>1</sup> Nearly half of all students (45%) are experiencing clinically significant depression or anxiety disorders.<sup>2</sup> Despite these high levels of need, nearly half of those students with clinically significant symptoms (48%) have not received any counseling or therapy in the past year. In other words, millions of students are struggling but are not receiving any support for their mental health challenges.

While mental health concerns are impacting communities across the country,<sup>3</sup> college students face a unique set of obstacles and challenges that affect their academic success and completion. According to a recent national survey, nearly half of enrolled college students indicated emotional stress (49%)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/What-Works-Mental-Health.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [https://healthymindsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2024-2025\\_HMS-National-Data-Report\\_Student.pdf](https://healthymindsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2024-2025_HMS-National-Data-Report_Student.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>

or mental health (41%) as factors in why they have considered leaving college, often referred to as “stopping out.”<sup>4</sup>

Colleges and universities often lack the resources to meet the surging demand for mental health services. The number of students arriving on campus with a diagnosed mental health disorder is rising and now includes half of all students, requiring institutional resources immediately upon enrollment.<sup>5</sup>

While federal investments supporting mental health needs for our nation’s K-12 students have increased in recent years, college students have not had the same support. The GLS Campus Suicide Prevention Grant Program, administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), is currently the only dedicated federal program addressing college student mental health. First authorized in 2004, the funding allows colleges and universities to expand services that support students at risk of suicide, including those experiencing substance use disorder. In its most recent cycle, the program awarded just \$2.9 million to only 20 institutions, providing an average of \$146,026 per grantee with most institutions receiving less. This funding level is far from sufficient given the scale of need.<sup>6</sup>

We are grateful for the bipartisan increase in funding for GLS to \$10.5 million during the FY 2026 appropriations cycle. By providing this increase in funding for the program, Congress has taken a helpful step to expand institutions’ ability to support their students. To build on the Committee’s commitment to the GLS Campus Grant program, we request that you further increase the GLS Campus Grant Program to at least \$15 million in FY 2027. Over the long term, we also ask the Committee to work toward equalizing the grant levels between campus grants and youth grants, which totaled \$45.8 million in FY 2026.

Additionally, we request that you again include bill and/or report language directing SAMHSA to prioritize grants and waive matching fund requirements for community colleges, HBCUs, TCUs, and other MSIs, which have far fewer resources to spare. We also strongly encourage including language ensuring that the allocated funding cannot be repurposed to fund other programs or terminated by the administration without Congressional authorization.

Over the years, the GLS Campus Suicide Prevention Grant Program has been important for many institutions and likely lifesaving for the thousands of students who have benefited from grant-funded initiatives.<sup>7</sup> Expanding this program would allow more institutions to deliver the support their students urgently need.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.gallup.com/file/analytics/660188/Gallup-Lumina%20Foundation-State%20of%20Higher%20Education%202025\\_Report.pdf](https://www.gallup.com/file/analytics/660188/Gallup-Lumina%20Foundation-State%20of%20Higher%20Education%202025_Report.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/su/su7304a9.htm>

<sup>6</sup> SAMHSA NOFO SM-24-004. [https://www.samhsa.gov/grants/grants-dashboard?grants\\_dashboard\\_search=SM-24-004&f%5B0%5D=by\\_award\\_fy%3A2025](https://www.samhsa.gov/grants/grants-dashboard?grants_dashboard_search=SM-24-004&f%5B0%5D=by_award_fy%3A2025)

<sup>7</sup> <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4386522/> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27982449/> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31066462/> <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/2461739>

Thank you for your leadership and attention to this critical issue. We welcome the opportunity to further engage with you in ways to strengthen federal support to address college student mental health.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ted Mitchell".

Ted Mitchell  
President

On behalf of:

American College Health Association  
American Council on Education  
Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors  
Campus Compact  
NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education  
The Healthy Minds Network  
The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs  
Today's Students Coalition