

MI Senate Education and Career Readiness Committee
Chair, Senator Lana Theis
Binsfeld Building
P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

Dear Education and Career Readiness Committee:

As a concerned Michigander, I urge you to support the training of teachers in recognizing and addressing the mental-health needs of students as stated in Senate Bill 321. While physical health of children is just as important, concern for their mental health has been neglected for too long. In the context of schooling, children with mental health issues may experience difficulty learning or making friends, decline in physical health, and many more barriers to their development. Training teachers in identifying the risk factors and how to help students experiencing them would be a monumental step in the improvement of our children's overall well-being and development.

According to Michigan's Official Education Data Source, in the 2021-2022 school year 10,749 students in Michigan were considered emotionally impaired or exhibiting emotional distress. Often times when a student is exhibiting abnormal behavior they are seen as acting out, but in many cases, it is caused by underlying emotional issues. Knowing the signs of mental health struggles can initiate a connection to treatment so that students can get the help they need, and not be punished for what is seen as inappropriate behavior.

It is important to note the monumental role that teachers play in not just education, but also the development and growth of their students. Teachers already do so much, so it can be difficult to ask one more thing of them. However, giving them mental health first-aid skills will improve interactions in the classroom between students and teachers, as well as improving the overall health and well-being of students.

By educating teachers on how to recognize mental health struggles, both our children's education and emotional health will benefit greatly. It is a basic right for students to be given all the resources necessary in order to succeed academically. Most importantly, it is our responsibility to advocate for children and their mental health because they cannot do so for themselves.

Wanting the best for our children and taking care of them is not a political issue, it is a basic human right. A student's health and education are foundational to having the opportunity to truly be successful in their adult life, so we must give them the best chance possible.

Sincerely,

[Insert your name]

[Insert your city/township]

[Phone number]