

## Support HB 2451 by Rep. Allison / SB 948 by Sen. West

### Create and Fund a Student Mental Health Allotment

#### Student Mental Health Challenges are Too Widespread to Rely Only on Crisis Interventions

- Texas Child Health Access Through Telemedicine (TCHAT) and crisis interventions provide critical, effective support — but are designed to reach a very narrow segment of students in need of specialized mental health care. TCHAT served 7,607 students statewide in FY 2022.<sup>1</sup>
- Meanwhile, in 2021, 33% of Texas high school students reported persistently feeling stressed, anxious, or depressed during the previous month and 22% seriously considered suicide.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Legislature Recognized this Challenge, Passing Bills in 2019 Requiring Districts to Implement Campus-wide Student Mental Health Strategies that Help Schools:

- Hire school counselors or social workers.
- Collaborate with community-based organizations like Local Mental Health Authorities to provide options for parents who decide to seek mental health support for their kids.
- Implement programs to prevent suicide, bullying, and substance use.
- Support staff on campus to coordinate TCHAT.
- Help students manage anxiety and conflict in order to promote a positive school climate.

#### Campus-wide Mental Health Strategies Improve Students’:

- **Learning and academic performance:** Students can focus on math, reading, writing, science, etc.
- **Health and safety:** Students are less likely to hurt themselves — or others.
- **Behavior:** Students are less likely to disrupt classes, bully other students, and act out.

#### But Texas Provides No Direct Funding to Districts for These Strategies

- 73% of ISDs used temporary federal ESSER funds for mental health.<sup>3</sup> The funds expire in 2024.
- Some school districts have used a portion of the School Safety Allotment on mental health strategies that are part of their school safety efforts.<sup>4</sup>

#### The Bill Creates a School Finance Allotment to Support these Strategies

- It creates the Mental Health Allotment and provides a minimum of \$100,000 per district.
- The bill allows for appropriations to increase the funding level, with a greater share provided to rural districts and districts with more than 50% educationally disadvantaged students.
- The Select House Committee on Youth Health & Safety recommended the Allotment.
- Ohio and Florida have created separate, specific allotments for mental health and wellbeing.

<sup>1</sup> Texas Education Agency HB 906 Mental Health Task Force. Year 3 Report of the Collaborative Task Force on Public School Mental Health Services. Pg. 44 (Jan. 2023). See Texas Child Mental Health Consortium Biennial Report to the Legislature (Sept, 2022).

<sup>2</sup> Texas Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) (2021). Conducted by the Texas Department of State Health Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. See Texas Education Agency HB 906 Mental Health Task Force. Year 3 Report of the Collaborative Task Force on Public School Mental Health Services. (Jan 2023).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Footnote 1. (pg 38).

<sup>4</sup> Texas School Safety Center. 2017-2020 District Audit Report: Findings on Safety and Security in Texas School Districts. (2022). 12% of districts use a portion of SSA funds for mental health personnel; 8% used for behavioral health services, and 13 percent used for suicide prevention initiatives.