



September 24, 2018

The Honorable Senator Jeff Merkley
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Representative Katherine Clark
1415 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Merkley and Representative Clark:

On behalf of the First Focus Campaign for Children, a national bipartisan children's advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families a priority in federal budget and policy decisions, we commend your work on behalf of our nation's children. S. 3427 and H.R. 6775 can have a profound effect on the health and well-being of children all across the country.

As you note, 20 percent of children ages 13 through 18 have, or will have, a serious mental illness. Over 1 out of every 10 children in the United States has a mood disorder, 1 out of 10 have a behavior or conduct disorder, and nearly 1 out of 10 have an anxiety disorder.

Your bills are timely given a recent study published this month in the [Journal of the American Medical Association](#) (JAMA), which revealed that "early adversity is associated with leading causes of adult morbidity and mortality and effects on life opportunities."

In fact, many of the individuals surveyed by JAMA, who identified themselves as African-American, Hispanic, or multiracial, those with less than a high school education, an income lower than \$15,000, unemployed or unable to work, or who are part of the LGBTQ community reported significantly higher exposure to adverse childhood experiences than their peers.

Therefore, we applaud and support your effort in urging funds be sent to school districts with the highest need and setting a minimal amount for each state.

The First Focus Campaign for Children is ready to partner with your offices to ensure that we address this important issue that impacts far too many vulnerable children.

Sincerely,

Bruce Lesley
President