

THE COUNSELING NOT CRIMINALIZATION IN SCHOOLS ACT

The Counseling Not Criminalization in Schools Act would invest in safe and nurturing school climates that support all students and address the over-policing of our nation's K-12 schools. **U.S. Senator Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.)** and **U.S. Senator Tina Smith (D-Minn.)** are the lead sponsors of the legislation in the Senate, and **U.S. Representatives Ayanna Pressley (D-Mass.)** along with **U.S. Representatives Jamaal Bowman (D-N.Y.)** and **Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.)** introduced the companion legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The data shows that counselors, social workers, psychologists and other trained professionals actually improve social and educational outcomes for kids in schools—whereas the involvement of police in schools leads to the criminalization of students, particularly students of color or those with disabilities. *The Counseling Not Criminalization in Schools Act* would prohibit the use of federal funds to increase police presence in schools and instead provide \$5 billion in new grant funding to help schools hire more counselors, social workers, and other behavioral health personnel and implement services in schools that create positive and safe climates for all students.

Right now, we are failing millions of children by not prioritizing the personnel and support they need. Fostering safe and inclusive schools starts with the people working directly with students. While we know students' social, emotional, and mental health are critical to their success, far too many children continue to attend schools that are woefully under-staffed by the personnel that would be responsible for supporting those needs. In fact, fewer than 10 percent of students go to schools that meet the recommended student-counselor ratio of 250:1. Meanwhile, nearly half of all students attend school with law enforcement officers present. This includes nearly two million students who attend schools with police but no counselors. It's time the federal government focused its resources on providing children with the school-based support system they need to feel safe and succeed.

The *Counseling Not Criminalization in Schools Act* would:

- **Prohibit the use of federal funds for maintaining police in schools:** Since 1999, the federal government has spent more than \$1 billion to support the increased presence of police in schools. However, evidence does not show that this investment has improved student outcomes and school safety. This legislation would prohibit federal funds to support the hiring, maintaining, or training of police officers in K-12 schools and instead divert that funding toward the many other uses related to school safety within applicable grant programs.
- **Invest billions to help schools hire counselors, social workers, and other trauma-informed support personnel necessary to create safe and inclusive learning environments:** The legislation helps districts build safe and inclusive schools by establishing a \$5 billion grant program to support the hiring of counselors, social workers, nurses, school psychologists, and other personnel. Further, the grant program helps districts implement strategies to improve school climate, such as school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports, and invest in trauma-informed services and professional development. As more school districts choose to move away from policies that criminalize students and push them out of school, this historic investment will ensure districts have the necessary resources to provide students with the supports they need to feel safe in school and thrive.
- **Incentivize states and districts to bring an end to the criminalization of young people, particularly Black, Native American and Latino students, immigrant students, students with disabilities, LGBTQ+ students and other historically marginalized students and instead invest in safe and nurturing environments where all students can thrive.**