



CONGRESSMAN ED TOWNS

10TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

NEWS RELEASE

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Reps. Towns, Sánchez & Sens. Lincoln, Clinton, Cochran Introduce Legislation to Increase Student Support Services in Low Income Schools

Washington, DC - Representatives Edolphus "Ed" Towns (NY-10), Linda T. Sánchez (CA-39), and Senators Blanche Lincoln (D-AR), Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY), and Thad Cochran (R-MS) introduced education legislation in Congress today to increase the number of school counselors, school social workers and school psychologists in qualified schools in low-income communities.

H.R. 6654/S.3364, the Increased Student Achievement Through Increased Student Support Act, will authorize grant funding to form partnerships between higher education institutions that train these student support professionals and Local Educational Agencies that serve low-income student populations in both urban and rural communities. The legislation also creates a student loan forgiveness program for individuals who have served five or more consecutive school years as school counselors, school social workers, or school psychologists in similarly qualified low-income schools.

"We recognize that in many of our Nation's public schools, teachers are struggling to meet not only the academic needs of their students, but their social, emotional and behavioral needs as well. This is a tall order for any one individual and points to the need for increasing counselors, social workers and psychologists in the schools that need them most," said Congressman Towns of the new legislation.

"Students in low-income neighborhoods should have the same opportunities as others for a productive and supportive learning environment," said Congresswoman Linda T. Sánchez. "By providing additional school support professionals, we can help address children's out-of-the-classroom needs so that when they're in the classroom, they can be safe, engaged, and achieving to their full potential."

A companion bill is being introduced in the Senate by Senators Blanche Lincoln, Hillary Rodham Clinton and Thad Cochran. "School counselors, psychologists, and social workers play an essential role in helping students achieve a bright future," said Senator Lincoln. "Many schools, particularly those in rural and low-income areas, have limited access to these crucial support service personnel to the detriment of our children. Our students—whether they are first generation college-bound students, children coping with the absence of a military parent deployed overseas, or students with special needs— all face unique challenges that can hinder their ability to succeed in school. It is our duty to ensure that all schools have the resources they need to address the ever-changing needs of our students so that they can reach their full potential."

"All students should have the opportunity to achieve their goals and realize their full potential," said Senator Clinton. "Expanding support and counseling services to schools in low-income communities will further help level the playing field. This bill will not only bring important resources to students who need it, but will also encourage counseling professionals to pursue a career providing these critical services where they're most needed."

"Many counties in my home state of Mississippi have only one counselor to serve all of the schools in the county," said Senator Cochran. "In an emergency situation it can take hours for this person to reach the student in need. Our children need to have consistent and accessible counselors and social workers who can provide guidance and psychological support. This legislation will enable students in rural areas to have access to such a support system."

The legislation has been endorsed by over 20 education and mental health organizations, including the American School Counselor Association, the American Counseling Association, the School Social Work Association of America and the National Association of School Psychologists. A joint statement released by these four organizations stated, "Increasing the achievement of students from low-income homes is critical to our nation, but schools must have the proper support systems in place to ensure that teachers are not alone in this effort. This legislation provides an opportunity for schools to access the appropriately trained school-employed mental health professionals necessary to ensure that students who need the most help receive it in a timely, focused manner."

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