

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 4, 2025

The Honorable Linda McMahon
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary McMahon,

I write to you with grave concern over the administration's reports of terminations of youth mental health grant funding to school districts in New York. The Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant (MHSP) and School-Based Mental Health Services Grant (SBMH) programs have benefitted not only New York but countless states across the country in urban and rural settings alike. I wrote to you about these terminations on May 9, 2025, and received an unsatisfactory response from your office on May 30, 2025. Both MHSP and SBMH programs play a vital role in addressing the shortage of school-based mental health professionals. Furthermore, they do not undermine standards for fairness, merit, and excellence in education as asserted in your response sent on May 30, 2025.

Your response to my earlier letter indicated that both the MHSP and SBMH programs would end at the end of the grants' current budget periods. This outcome would harm both the students and mental health professionals who benefit from these programs. The demand for behavioral health, mental health, and substance abuse disorder services is projected to increase in the coming years. By 2037, it is estimated that there will be a shortage of 113,830 psychologists, 50,440 psychiatrists, and 39,710 school counselors.^[1] The MHSP and SBMH programs directly address this shortage, and discontinuing these programs will negatively impact current and future students.

These funding streams were intended to create a workforce development pipeline for school counselors, psychologists, and social workers. Thousands of students have benefited from the mental health care they received because of these programs. There are also hundreds of future mental health professionals in New York alone who benefit from these programs. However, with current grants set to expire soon, successful programs, like those in Lyons Central School District and the Seneca Falls Central School District, that have built mental health professional pipelines for students in high-need school districts could see their momentum stopped in its tracks. Hundreds of future mental health professionals, who are sorely needed across New York, stand to lose the support of innovative programs that serve my constituents and their families.

I am concerned that the Department is disrupting grant funding that truly represents how the government can address the direct needs of our taxpayers and their families. These programs work, and New York students deserve their continued benefits.

^[1] <https://bhw.hrsa.gov/data-research/projecting-health-workforce-supply-demand#:~:text=,and%20Recovery%20Loan%20Repayment%20Program>

I request your response to the following questions by no later than June 18, 2025:

1. Will the Department commit to answering the nine questions from my original letter sent May 9, 2025, most of which were unaddressed in your response dated on May 30, 2025?
2. How did each MHSP and SBMH grant that received a non-continuation notice violate Federal civil rights law?
3. What are the Department's plans to recompetete its mental health program funds in the next grant cycle, including the grant application and selection criteria for the upcoming cycle?
4. How will the Department address service disruptions for New York students after the expiration of this funding?
5. Explain how the Department plans to address mental health workforce shortages stemming from the disruption of this funding.
6. Have New York mental health and education stakeholders been engaged? Please provide a detailed explanation of your engagement processes with stakeholders.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator