



December 11, 2023

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The Honorable Bernard Sanders  
Chair  
Senate Health, Education, Labor,  
and Pensions Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable William M. Cassidy, M.D.  
Ranking Member  
Senate Health, Education, Labor,  
and Pensions Committee  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Sanders and Ranking Member Cassidy,

On behalf of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning and the 26 undersigned organizations representing a wide range of education stakeholders, from parents to teachers, from school-based mental health professionals to principals, we write to strongly oppose S.3393, the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Reauthorization (SUPPORT) Act's removal of existing statutory language supporting the social and emotional needs of students.

We are deeply concerned that the SUPPORT Act aims to amend Section 7134 of the Trauma-Informed Support Services and Mental Health Care for Children and Youth in Education Settings Grant Program (TISS), which Congress authorized in 2018. The bipartisan program, (42 U.S.C. 280h-7), includes social and emotional learning as an authorized evidence-based activity. Without explanation or evidence, the SUPPORT Act would strike the term "social and emotional learning" and replace it with the undefined term "developmentally appropriate practices."

In [FY2022](#) and [FY2023](#), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) made TISS awards using funding provided by the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA). At the direction of Congress in BSCA, in both award years SAMHSA [required](#) grant recipients to, "develop and implement a training plan for teachers, teacher assistants, school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, and mental health professionals that achieves the following: Fosters safe and stable learning environments and prevents and mitigates the effects of trauma (including through social and emotional learning)." To date, nearly \$34 million in TISS grants have already been administered to 21 state agencies and school districts, and one tribal educational agency across 17 states who are implementing evidence-based, social and emotional learning to support student well-being. Striking the term "social and emotional learning" would cause administrative confusion and negatively impact the implementation of social and emotional learning as an evidence-based strategy to foster safe and stable learning environments that prevent and mitigate the effects of trauma for students. Such a change to statute would also have far-reaching consequences for the



implementation of social and emotional learning as an evidence-based strategy in other federal grant programs.

Students, families, educators, and school districts deserve to receive support based on evidence and years of research. Decades of research demonstrate social and emotional learning is critical for students' academic and holistic success, and plays a vital role in supporting child and youth mental health and well-being. According to a 2023 meta-analysis, students participating in social and emotional learning at schools had higher "school functioning," including grades, test scores, attendance, homework completion, and engagement. The analysis also found decreases among students in aggression and bullying, anxiety, stress, depression, suicidality. Students also felt safer at schools, reporting higher levels of inclusion, connectedness and healthy relationships.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, a landmark 2011 meta-analysis found that social and emotional learning increased students' academic performance by 11 percentile points, compared to students who did not participate in SEL.<sup>2</sup> In addition, cost-benefit research shows that for every dollar spent on evidence-based SEL programs studied, on average, there is an \$11 return on investment.<sup>3</sup>

As the Senate HELP Committee marks up the SUPPORT Act, it is vital that social and emotional learning be maintained in the bill to be consistent with current law to support our nation's students, educators, school leaders, and school-based mental health professionals. Thank you for your attention to our concerns regarding this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)  
All4Ed  
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)  
Boys Town  
Committee for Children (CFC)  
Communities In Schools (CIS)  
Confident Parents, Confident Kids  
Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE)  
The Education Trust  
Equip Our Kids!  
Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)  
National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)  
National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)  
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)  
National Center for School Mental Health (NCSMH)  
National Education Association (NEA)  
National Equity Project (NEP)

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<sup>1</sup> Cipriano, Christina, et al. "[Stage 2 Report: The State of the Evidence for Social and Emotional Learning: A Contemporary Meta-Analysis of Universal School-Based SEL Interventions.](#)" 2 Feb. 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Durlak, Joseph A, et al. "[The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions.](#)" *Child Development*, vol. 82, no. 1, Feb. 2011, pp. 405–432.

<sup>3</sup> Clive Belfield et al., "[The Economic Value of Social and Emotional Learning](#)" (Teachers College, Columbia University, February 2015).



**COLLABORATIVE FOR  
ACADEMIC, SOCIAL, AND  
EMOTIONAL LEARNING**

National Parent Teacher Association (National PTA)  
National Parents Union (NPU)  
Parents as Teachers  
Pure Edge, Inc.  
Respectful Ways  
School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA)  
Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE America)  
Social and Emotional Learning Providers Association (SELPA)  
Social Emotional Learning Alliance for the United States (SEL4US)  
Urban Assembly