

HELPING FAMILIES HEAL ACT

THE MIKE BROWN BILL



Helping Families Heal Act

Congresswoman Cori Bush (MO-01)

Summary

The United States is experiencing a severe mental health [crisis](#). While this crisis is driven by a combination of factors, police violence has unquestionably worsened it.

Studies have demonstrated a [strong correlation](#) between police encounters and higher rates of post-traumatic stress symptoms, including self-harm and suicide. Around [one-quarter](#) of urban youth experience a direct police encounter by age 15, and more than half of those involve some form of aggression. The mothers of youth who are stopped by police are [twice as likely](#) as their counterparts to report worse sleep and health.

In Black communities, the mental health impact of police violence is [staggering](#). Black people in America are killed by the police at [three times](#) the rate of their white counterparts, and research shows a [correlation](#) between police killings of unarmed Black people and a rise in depression-related E.R. visits among Black people. Police killings of unarmed Black people are responsible for more than [50 million](#) additional days of negative mental health per year.

As [tens of millions](#) of Americans are struggling to find quality, affordable mental health care, there is a dire need for more resources to address the devastating consequences of police violence. That's why I'm re-introducing the ***Helping Families Heal Act***, first-of-its-kind legislation to expand mental health services for communities harmed by police violence. Specifically, this legislation would establish grant programs within the Department of Health and Human Services to expand communities' ability to:

- Recruit, hire, train, and dispatch mental health professionals and community health workers to provide comprehensive mental health services to individuals impacted by police violence, including students and school personnel; and
- Implement community-based mental health programs that build awareness, expand screening efforts, incorporate community interventions, and facilitate partnerships among families, students, and health care workers.

A comprehensive approach to combating our mental health crisis must address the lingering harm of police violence. Join me in supporting this vital legislation!

Section-by-Section

Sec. 1. Short Title

- Defines the short title of the bill as the “Helping Families Heal Act”

Sec. 2. Helping Families Heal Program

- Establishes the Helping Families Heal Program to be carried out by the Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use at HHS.
- Creates \$50 million in funding for community-based organizations (including health care providers) to:
 - Support communities’ ability to recruit, hire, train, and dispatch mental health professionals and community health workers to provide comprehensive mental health services to individuals who have suffered traumatic experiences, or are in grief, in bereavement, or at risk of suicide or violence, as a result of witnessing or experiencing law enforcement personnel violence, or the death of a family member, colleague or neighbor due to law enforcement personnel violence.
 - Implement community-based mental health programs that:
 - Build awareness of individual, community, and intergenerational trauma as a result of witnessing or experiencing law enforcement personnel violence.
 - Train staff and volunteers to identify, and screen for, signs of trauma exposure, mental health disorders, and risk of suicide in the wake of law enforcement personnel violence.
 - Incorporate community interventions, family engagement, and intergenerational counseling that encourage the development of positive mental health, prevent mental health disorders, and diminish the impact of trauma resulting from law enforcement personnel violence.
 - Facilitate partnerships among families, mental health and substance use disorder providers, family-based mental health and substance use disorder providers, trauma networks, and health care providers (including mental health professionals and community health workers who specialize in pediatric services).
 - Establish mechanisms for individuals who have witnessed or experienced law enforcement personnel violence to report incidents of violence or plans to commit violence.
 - Provide technical assistance to community-based organizations in the implementation of these resources.
- Ensures equitable geographic and need-based distribution of funding.
- Ensures processes to evaluate outcomes of the activities carried out under the program.

Sec. 3. Healing for Students Program

- Establishes the Healing for Students Program to be carried out by the Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use at HHS.
- Creates \$50 million in funding for schools and educational agencies to:

- Support communities' ability to recruit, hire, train, and dispatch mental health professionals and community health workers to provide comprehensive mental health services to students and school personnel who have suffered traumatic experiences, or are in grief, in bereavement, or at risk of suicide or violence, as a result of witnessing or experiencing law enforcement personnel violence, or the death of a family member, colleague or neighbor due to law enforcement personnel violence.
- Implement school-based mental health programs that:
 - Build awareness of individual, community, and intergenerational trauma as a result of witnessing or experiencing law enforcement personnel violence.
 - Train school personnel to identify, and screen for, signs of trauma exposure, mental health disorders, and risk of suicide in the wake of law enforcement personnel violence.
 - Incorporate family engagement, student supports, and intergenerational counseling that encourage the development of positive mental health, prevent mental health disorders, and diminish the impact of trauma resulting from law enforcement personnel violence.
 - Educate students and their families on the stigma surrounding mental health.
 - Facilitate partnerships among families, students, mental health and substance use disorder providers, family-based mental health and substance use disorder providers, trauma networks, and health care providers (including mental health professionals and community health workers who specialize in pediatric services).
 - Establish mechanisms for students and school personnel who have witnessed or experienced law enforcement personnel violence to report incidents of violence or plans to commit violence.
- Provide technical assistance to schools in the implementation of these resources.
- Ensures equitable geographic and need-based distribution of funding.
- Ensures processes to evaluate the outcomes of the activities carried out under the program.

Sec. 4. Interagency Task Force

- Establishes a task force of representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Education, and Department of Justice to coordinate and promote holistic, qualified responses to victims of law enforcement personnel violence.
- Defines the duties of the Task Force, which include consulting with key stakeholders, recommending criteria for collecting and reviewing relevant statistical data, and coordinating existing grants and other resources to better serve people who have experienced law enforcement personnel violence.

Sec. 5. Definitions

- Defines key terms.