

## **Children's Mental Health Campaign:** **Strengthening Behavioral Health Supports in School**

To advocate meaningfully for children, we must first acknowledge the nesting structures within which they reside. Supporting children's behavioral health requires us to advocate for children at home with their families, in their schools and within the context of the broader community.

Children spend a significant portion of their lives at school and for children with behavioral health needs, schools often serve as a place where these needs are identified and treated. However, many schools do not have enough resources to address student behavioral health needs. As a result children with behavioral health challenges are often left without the proper tools and supports, may be expelled from early education settings, and risk dropping out of school. The Children's Mental Health Campaign promotes strategies to strengthen behavioral health supports in school and remove barriers that prevent children with behavioral health challenges from reaching their full potential.



### **2021-2022 Legislative Session**

#### **An Act relative to mental health education | H.616/S.292**

***Rep. Higgins & Sen. Collins***

Updates the physical education mandate to make mental health education a required subject in all Massachusetts public and private schools, in grades K-12. This legislative initiative is aligned with current efforts to integrate physical and mental health care.

#### **An Act to support healthy development among preschoolers | H.544 / S.316**

***Rep. Balser & Sen. DiDomenico***

Requires the Department of Early Education and Care to promulgate performance standards to limit expulsion and suspension of children from all DEEC licensed early education and care preschool programs. These standards are currently in place for Head Start programs.

## **An Act to create a thriving public health response for adolescents | H.2084**

Rep. Decker

Addresses several root causes of inequitable access to school-based behavioral health (SBBH) by establishing systems and protocols for the creation and maintenance of SBBH resources. Creating these resources will ensure all students' behavioral health needs are supported. The bill also includes additional legislative provisions that will enable children and families to access behavioral health services when and where they need them.

### **Fiscal Year 2022**

#### **\$500,000: Return to School "Bridge" Programs**

***DPH Line Item #4590-0250***

The focus of Bridge programs is to ensure that youth who have been out of school for psychiatric or other hospitalizations can successfully transition back to school. The proposed funding will enable the continuation of direct support for students struggling with serious mental health challenges, made possible by supporting Bridge program staff in schools (clinicians and academic coordinators) in adjusting their roles and developing skills needed to work effectively during the COVID-19 pandemic. The proposed funding will also support Bridge Programs as all students transition back to school full-time.

#### **\$150,000: School Mental Health Technical Assistance Center**

**DMH Line item: #5042-5000**

The FY21 budget included a \$50K earmark in DMH line item #5042-5000 to provide services to address behavioral health needs arising from the impact of COVID-19, including the impact of remote learning, and services to assist school districts with behavioral health support. This earmark specifically calls for the MA Association for Mental Health to partner with the BIRCh Center to develop a plan for establishment of a school-based behavioral health technical assistance center.

Funding will be dedicated to planning and collaboration with community stakeholders, further development of a school-based behavioral health technical assistance center, and coordinating qualitative and quantitative data collection.

---

***For additional information, contact Courtney Chelo at [cchelo@mspcc.org](mailto:cchelo@mspcc.org)***

***Visit us online at [childrensmentalhealthcampaign.org](http://childrensmentalhealthcampaign.org)***