

Targeting Emotional and Mental Stability Act of 2022 (TEAMS Act)

BACKGROUND

Student and collegiate athletes experience unique mental health challenges related to increased pressure to perform, high visibility in their communities, and sports-related injuries. Simultaneously, the culture of athletics encourages “mental toughness,” which can increase the stigma associated with seeking help, resulting in profound emotional distress among children and young adults.

A National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) [survey](#) found that 30 percent of student athletes reported feeling seriously overwhelmed in the previous month, and nearly 25 percent felt mentally exhausted. The NCAA also found that less than half of men’s and women’s sports participants felt comfortable seeking mental health support from professionals on campus. Recently, the rate of suicides among student athletes – particularly women – has grown at an unprecedented rate. However, few evidence-based best practices remain for providing mental health support for student athletes. There is a growing need to ensure secondary schools and higher education institutions support student athletes through innovative mental health programming and services.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

The TEAMS Act would establish a grant program for secondary schools and institutions of higher education to implement innovative mental health pilot programs to support the unique needs of student athletes. The funds would be awarded by the Secretary of Education, in coordination with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use; the funding under this program would be used to create school-based mental health programs to address anxiety and depression in the student athlete population, such as virtual mental health care services, digital peer-to-peer counseling, 24/7 text crisis lines, training for coaches and staff on how to respond to students exhibiting signs of mental distress, and campus-wide initiatives to address the stigma associated with seeking help.

Institutions awarded funds under the grant program would be required to report to the Secretary within six months of receiving the grant. Entities would be required to (1) outline the services they are providing to address student athlete mental health, (2) review the effects of those services, (3) identify best practices, and (4) detail how those best practices will be implemented.

The awarded grants would not exceed \$1,000,000 a year, and the program would require \$50,000,000 in appropriated funds in fiscal years 2024, 2025, and 2026. The Secretary would conduct evaluations to ensure awarded funds are used appropriately and report findings to the House Energy and Commerce Committee, House Education and Labor Committee, Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, and Senate Finance Committee.