

U.S. Surgeon General and Bipartisan Policymakers Commit to Address Youth Mental Health, Loneliness, Isolation

Washington, DC - This week, Senate Finance Committee leaders announced they aim to put together a bipartisan legislative package this summer addressing youth mental health. Finance Chair Ron Wyden (D-OR) highlighted five areas of behavioral health the committee is planning to focus on, including strengthening the workforce; increasing integration, coordination, and access to care; ensuring parity between behavioral and physical health care; furthering the use of telehealth; and improving access to behavioral health care for children and young people.

“There is new urgency for Congress to step up the fight against this epidemic. Diagnosing an issue and getting the right care for young people was already too difficult before anyone had heard of Covid-19,” Chairman Wyden stated in his opening remarks.

He highlighted that “[t]he crisis is even larger today. Kids are feeling isolated and depression is up.”

In testimony before the committee, Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, M.D. elaborated on several points he underscored in his [advisory](#) on youth mental health issued in December. Specifically, he included four recommendations to address the “crisis of loneliness and hopelessness” that American youth face:

1. Ensure every child has access to high-quality, affordable, and culturally competent mental health care;
2. Focus on prevention, by investing in school and community-based programs that have been shown to improve the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children at low cost and high benefit;
3. Better understand the impact that technology and social media has on mental health;
4. Increase individual and community engagement in overcoming the stigma associated with seeking help.

In addition, Dr. Murthy [highlighted](#) Coalition member [Beyond Differences](#) on their peer support program that helps youth build connection, community, and self-esteem.

“I’m incredibly pleased that there is such passionate bipartisan support to address the issue of youth mental health, which has been more apparent than ever due to the isolation and loneliness spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic,” Andrew MacPherson, Founder and Board Chair, CESIL stated. “I applaud U.S. Surgeon General Murthy on his partnership with the Senate Finance Committee during such a vital time; we look forward to continuing to work with both bodies of work on policy solutions to support the mental health of all Americans.”



The Senate Finance Committee will convene its second [hearing](#) on youth mental health on Tuesday, February 15th to continue discussion on challenges facing young people and families related to youth mental health care.

***The Coalition to End Social Isolation & Loneliness** brings together a diverse set of national organizations including consumer groups, health plans, health care providers, technology innovators, patient advocates and more to develop and advocate for federal policy solutions to address the epidemic of social isolation and loneliness. For more information, please visit: www.endsocialisolation.org*