

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 259

Promoting youth mental health and well-being in a changing climate.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 27, 2023

Mr. THOMPSON of California (for himself and Ms. CASTOR of Florida) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

RESOLUTION

Promoting youth mental health and well-being in a changing climate.

Whereas there is a significant, negative impact that a rapid and ongoing changing climate has on youth in the United States;

Whereas youth are especially vulnerable to the physical and mental health impacts of climate-related disasters and the cumulative toll youth will endure from additional exposure to increasing climate-related disasters;

Whereas youth represent a particularly vulnerable group because greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere will impact today's and tomorrow's youth throughout their biological, psychological, academic, and social development;

Whereas an American Psychological Association and ecoAmerica report stated that, as of 2016, as climate-related disasters continue to increase, more youth will be directly affected by increasing rates of stress and trauma through interruption in schooling, disruptions in routine, separation from caregivers due to evacuations or displacement, and parental stress after a disaster;

Whereas recent studies cited in the American Psychological Association and ecoAmerica report have documented that high levels of stress during childhood, such as those associated with the experience of a climate-related disaster or displacement, can affect the development of neural pathways in ways that impair memory, executive function, and decision making in later life;

Whereas a 2016 Social Science and Medicine study found that experiencing an extreme weather event before age 5 resulted in higher levels of anxiety and depression among adults;

Whereas recent studies confirm individuals from low-income communities, indigenous communities, and communities of color are often the most vulnerable to the worst impacts of a changing climate, such as flooding, drought, fire, and extreme heat;

Whereas a study by the American Public Health Association and ecoAmerica entitled, “Making the Connection: Climate Changes Mental Health”, shows that up to 45 percent of youth have developed depression after a climate-related disaster, affecting both their caregivers and the youth themselves;

Whereas a National Library of Medicine study found an association between increases in pediatric psychiatrist visits and polluted air from wildfires;

Whereas there are direct links between fine particulate matter (PM 2.5) exposure and neuropsychological effects, such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, decreased memory, depleted academic performance, and autism;

Whereas, according to a 2017 report by the Lancet Planetary Health Journal, “The Impact of Climate Change on Youth Depression and Mental Health”, an increase in emergency department visits was incited by higher levels of humidity and rising temperatures;

Whereas, in 2021, 64 percent of individuals in the United States lived in places that experienced a multi-day heat wave, considered the most dangerous form of climate-related disaster;

Whereas the frequency and intensity of climate-related disasters is increasing exponentially;

Whereas a 2019 report suggested that as the frequency of heat waves increases due to the changing climate, school-based outdoor recreational opportunities for youth that benefit mental and physical well-being will be curtailed by extreme heat;

Whereas, in 2020, a poll from the Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation found that 57 percent of teenagers stated they were frightened by climate change, while 52 percent were angered by it and a mere 29 percent of youth were optimistic for the future;

Whereas, according to a 2021 study surveying over 10,000 youth, 45 percent of respondents reported that thoughts

of climate change have affected their daily lives and abilities negatively;

Whereas, in 2021, the National Association of School Psychologists, representing more than 25,000 members, declared the need to increase awareness of the harmful effects of climate change on youth, increase resources, and advocate for climate justice;

Whereas the American Psychological Association has issued a report stating that children are among the individuals in the United States facing the greatest impacts of climate change;

Whereas the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child has concluded that children and youth fare better during adversity if they also have the help of noncare-giver role models, such as teachers or coaches; and

Whereas the World Health Organization acknowledges that mental health isn't just the absence of mental health disorders, but also encompasses the human capacity to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) shall take effective action on climate
3 change, guided by the science provided in the 2021
4 United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate
5 Change report, to protect the mental health and
6 well-being of current and future youth; and

7 (2) supports the expansion of funding for cli-
8 mate education, resilience, and adaptation projects

1 that benefit the mental health and well-being of
2 youth, including—

3 (A) incorporating trauma-informed ap-
4 proaches to mental health into existing disaster
5 preparation efforts;

6 (B) engaging in education and outreach to
7 reduce the stigma associated with seeking treat-
8 ment;

9 (C) reducing cost and increasing access for
10 treatment (such as through Federally qualified
11 health centers and mobile and virtual health
12 care);

13 (D) increasing insurance and reimburse-
14 ment under the Medicare program under title
15 XVIII of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C.
16 1395 et seq.) and the Medicaid program under
17 title XIX of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.)
18 for mental health care treatment;

19 (E) funding community-wide vulnerability
20 assessments;

21 (F) addressing inequity by studying the
22 impacts of income disparity at local levels that
23 have been linked to higher community-wide vul-
24 nerability to climate risk;

- 1 (G) expanding local, place-based, mutual
2 aid networks that supply mental health support
3 during and post climate-related disaster events
4 and proactively promote mental and emotional
5 resilience; and
- 6 (H) providing direct funding to school dis-
7 tricts that need immediate resources to help
8 children and families cope with the mental
9 health effects of continued climate-related disas-
10 ters.

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