



The ACCESS in Mental Health Act ***BILL SUMMARY***

We are facing a national mental health crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic increased the need for mental healthcare while exacerbating racial and socioeconomic inequities in access to high quality, culturally responsive care. As of 2023, [nearly 1/3](#) of adults in the U.S. were reporting symptoms of anxiety and/or depressive disorder. In December 2021, the U.S. Surgeon General issued an [Advisory](#) highlighting the urgency of the youth mental health crisis. **However, our nation's workforce of mental health professionals is not nearly sufficient to meet such an unprecedented moment.** More than [122 million](#) Americans live in a Mental Health Professional Shortage Area, and most schools [do not meet](#) recommended ratios for the number of school-employed mental health professionals to students. The United States needs [over 6,000](#) additional mental healthcare professionals to meet this need.

Not only do we need more mental health professionals in our communities and schools, but we need more Black and Brown mental health professionals who are equipped to provide culturally responsive and trauma-informed care. As of 2021, only [8%](#) of the national psychology workforce is Hispanic, 5% is Black or African-American, and 3% is Asian. **This lack of diversity in the mental health workforce impedes access to high quality, culturally responsive care for historically marginalized communities.** Black and Brown behavioral health providers have been shown to be [more likely](#) to meet the needs of historically marginalized populations and patients are more likely to report greater satisfaction when seen by providers who reflect their racial and ethnic identities.

To address these issues in our nation's mental health system, **Congressman Bowman (NY-16) introduced the *Advancing Culturally Competent and Equitable Supportive Services (ACCESS) in Mental Health Act*.** This bill would:

- Provide grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) including Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) to **create, expand, or improve graduate programs in mental health fields.** These fields include psychology, counseling, social work, psychiatry, school-based mental health professions, substance use disorder prevention and treatment, and more.
- Provide **grants of \$10,000 per year to students pursuing graduate degrees** in mental health fields at HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs to help cover the cost of attendance.

The *ACCESS in Mental Health Act* is endorsed by: American Psychological Association, American Federation of Teachers, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, National Association of Social Workers, American Mental Health Counselors Association, National Association of School Psychologists, American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, National Alliance on Mental Illness, Anxiety and Depression Association of America, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, American Counseling Association, American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work, International OCD Foundation, Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance, and Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance, Young Invincibles