



**PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION**  
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PAEAonline.org • 703-548-5538

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August 10, 2021

The Honorable Lauren Underwood  
1130 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Underwood:

On behalf of the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA), the national organization that represents all 273 accredited PA programs in the United States, we are writing to thank you for your recent introduction of the Child Suicide Prevention and Lethal Means Safety Act. If enacted, this bill would meaningfully advance the efforts of PA programs to prepare graduates to provide high-quality mental health care for children and adolescents throughout the country. As such, PAEA is proud to endorse this legislation.

Prior to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported a dramatic 56% increase in suicide rates among young people between 2007 and 2017.<sup>1</sup> Due to increased social isolation and reduced access to school-based mental health resources as a result of the pandemic, this concerning trend is likely to accelerate in the absence of significant federal intervention. The introduction of the Child Suicide Prevention and Lethal Means Safety Act comes at a time when collaboration between

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019). *Death Rates Due to Suicide and Homicide Among Persons Aged 10-24: United States, 2000-2017*. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db352-h.pdf>

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the federal government and health professions education stakeholders is urgently needed to effectively combat this public health crisis.

To address this challenge, the bill would make critical investments to assist PA and other health professions programs in training students to counsel patients in a manner that will prevent lethal means injuries and deaths. By prioritizing the development of curriculum on topics such as screening for suicidal risk factors and associated intervention strategies, the bill maximizes the potential of future clinicians to reverse recent trends. Additionally, with a substantial authorization of \$10 million annually through fiscal year 2025, the bill provides the level of funding necessary to ensure the expansion of the high-quality curricula that PA graduates need to effectively identify and treat patients with suicidal ideation and ultimately save lives.

We welcome the opportunity to collaborate on the advancement of the Child Suicide Prevention and Lethal Means Safety Act and look forward to continuing to serve as a resource to your office. Should you have specific questions or if you would like additional information, please contact Director of Government Relations Tyler Smith at 703-667-4356 or [tsmith@PAEAonline.org](mailto:tsmith@PAEAonline.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M Statler".

Michel Statler, MLA, PA-C  
President

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mary Jo Bondy".

Mary Jo Bondy, DHEd, MHS, PA-C  
Chief Executive Officer