

CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILY SERVICES (CYF)

Resolution CYF-22-03

THE BLACK YOUTH SUICIDE EPIDEMIC

WHEREAS, since 1993, the suicide rate in Black children has increased significantly, from 1.36 million, and 2.54 per million and decreased in White children, from 1.14 to 0.77 per million according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration;

WHEREAS, the suicide rate of Black children ages 5 to 12 is roughly two times higher compared with White children of the same age group;

WHEREAS, the United States has failed to act on behalf of Black youth by implementing laws to address this newly emerged health crisis;

WHEREAS, the states of New York and New Jersey have recognized that Black youth suicides are on the rise and have made efforts to combat the alarming suicide rates by attempting to implement legislation; however, to date, legislation specifically addressing Black youth suicides has not been passed in these or any other states;

WHEREAS, black youth are disproportionately exposed to violence and traumatic stress in their communities, which can increase the likelihood of these youth dying by suicide;

WHEREAS, racial discrimination, poverty, and unhealthy dietary practices are also risk factors for poor mental health and suicidal ideation among Black youth;

WHEREAS, according to the National Institutes of Health, "[c]yberbullying disproportionately affects youth who are already vulnerable to mental health and behavioral health disparities, including members of sexual minorities (i.e., gay, lesbian, bisexual), girls, and racial and ethnic minorities";

WHEREAS, a lack of awareness of mental health and adequate mental health treatment within Black communities add to the adversity surrounding Black youth suicide rates; and

WHEREAS, black youth accounted for nearly 11% of 9th-12th grade students who reported having been electronically bullied during the previous 12 months, and a 2011 study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics revealed 252, 000 Black youth were cyberbullied.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) call on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to conduct extensive research regarding Black youth suicides, followed by the development of an extensively researched national plan of action for suicide prevention among all youth;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL supports the U.S. Congress providing funding and support for this plan of action and includes a national policy that mandates youth suicide prevention training and awareness in states and communities;

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL work with community stakeholders to ensure that the trainings occur in their states and local communities;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the plan of action also include the creation of a suicide prevention and cyberbullying resources and services similar to a hotline but updated for use with social media and modern technology for youth of all racial and ethnic groups, and such resources should be implemented to address the present racial disparities in mental health treatment and cyberbullying of youth of color; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, members of the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate, and other federal and state government officials and agencies as appropriate.

SPONSOR(S): Senator Brenda Gilmore (TN) and Representative Karen Camper (TN)

Committee of Jurisdiction: Children, Youth, and Family Services (CYF) Policy Committee

Ratified in Plenary Session: December 2, 2021

Ratification certified by: Representative Billy Mitchell (GA), NBCSL President