



NM Delegation Hails Nearly \$2.4 Million to Increase Mental Health Services for Students Across the State

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Press Release

WASHINGTON— U.S. Senators Tom Udall (D-N.M.) and Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.), and U.S. Representatives Ben Ray Luján (D-N.M.), Deb Haaland (D-N.M.) and Xochitl Torres Small (D-N.M.) applauded nearly \$2.4 million in federal funding awarded to the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) to expand the number of licensed mental health providers in public schools.

NMPED will use the **\$2,387,208** grant to hire over 400 School-Based Mental Health providers over the course of the five-year grant. This grant will address the need for mental health service providers in lower-income school districts that lack access to these services. The funding will also address gaps in mental health options for districts serving Native American students and rural areas of New Mexico.

“All New Mexico students should have equal access to licensed mental health professionals in our public schools,” **said Udall, a senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee.** “Accessible mental health services are especially vital during this difficult time, and it is critical to address gaps that disproportionately affect Native and rural students. The New Mexico Public Education Department will work closely with Native American and rural communities across New Mexico to employ these services in schools. I will continue working to secure this essential funding so that all New Mexico students can get the resources they need for their mental health.”

"All New Mexico students deserve to have access to mental health care. I am proud to support this funding that will help us place more licensed mental health professionals in all of our schools," **said Heinrich.** "We must tackle the disparities in access to school-based behavioral health services so that all of our children and families who need support can find it."

"The stress and uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting New Mexico's children, and schools must be equipped to support their behavioral and mental health needs. This is a challenge for many disadvantaged school districts, especially those in rural and Tribal communities, where stretched budgets prevent them from providing youth with the wraparound supports they need to learn and thrive," **said Luján.** "Today's investment will empower NMPED to place mental health providers where they are needed most. I'll continue fighting alongside New Mexico's delegation to bring additional federal funding to our state to improve the health and welfare of our youth."

"Many New Mexicans are in a constant battle that is not always visible, and our mental health care system needs more support to manage the drastic changes in our lives that increase stress and anxiety. When I heard from students during roundtable in August, they were worried about going to school online, not being able to do extra-curricular activities, and even getting a loved one sick if they went to school. It's crucial for students to have access to the resources and help that they need to manage the mental health struggles they're facing, and the federal funding in these grants will help lower-income school districts provide services to students across New Mexico," **said Haaland.**

"Rural New Mexicans struggle with unique challenges that sometimes require additional support from mental health care providers. In our schools, young Americans are disproportionately struggling with mental health, which is why earlier this year, I worked with my colleagues to direct the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services to provide specialized training to school-based nurses

and teachers on treating mental health challenges experienced by students,” **said Torres Small.** “This latest funding for NMPED will help address obstacles facing young New Mexicans’ mental health by placing more licensed mental health professionals in our schools, especially in some of the most remote regions of our state. I will continue to work to address access to school-based behavioral health services so our children and families who need support can find it close to home.”