

House Health & Human Services

02/18/2025 Upon Adjournment

HB25-1160 Youth Prevention Mental Health Pilot Program

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Paula Gruentzel For themselves	I SUPPORT the Youth Mental Health Pilot Program. As things get worse for Coloradans, youth always suffer the most yet have no voice. Please support this bill.
Jennifer Ha For themselves	<p>My name is Jennifer Ha and I am a first-generation Gifted and Talented student on the Colorado Gifted and Talented Student Board. I am testifying for HB25-1160 concerning the creation of a youth prevention mental health pilot program as an advocate for its benefits for marginalized communities if implemented.</p> <p>My early life was spent in a very under-resourced community in relative poverty. The struggles that came with living under such conditions were issues I had to confront from elementary school, such as the fact that my housing circumstances seemed worse than those of some of my white peers and how none of them seemed to live in my neighborhood at all. It only felt more difficult to grasp given how I did not yet understand concepts like redlining or the wage gap; everything just felt wrong and hopeless in some vague all-encompassing way that was beyond me. This feeling of powerlessness became more pronounced once I was identified as GT and gradually felt the pressure of supposedly having the intellectual capacity to "get out." It reinforced the idea that I had potential in some way, but the lack of academic resources coupled with a lack of emotional support to help me process how and why I did not have the same opportunities as other wealthier gifted kids instilled a sense of inferiority as a component of my character. Throughout all of that time, never once could I access proper mental health support services. I was diagnosed significantly later with anxiety and depression, hindering my personal development for years and how I navigated an educational environment.</p>

	<p>The intersectionality of healthcare access and other facets of marginalization—whether race, gender identity, or class—is ever present throughout America and it is no less visible within our student populations. The inaccessibility of healthcare is only exacerbated when referring to mental health services. The National Institutes of Health itself has published research on “Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Mental Health Care” (2014, February 18) demonstrating the disparity between racial/ethnic minorities’ access to mental health services as opposed to whites. People of color across the board are less likely to receive the necessary care at all and are more likely to receive inadequate care if they do get treated. Demographic intersectionality means these are the same people who are more predisposed to poverty. For many students growing up in these communities, publicly funded resources are one of the few if not the only way their needs are met. Access for some is not just a challenge, but sometimes an impossibility. My struggle with feeling as if my performance in school was an exception rather than something I was supposed to be able to achieve is in no way unique. This is the plight of countless students who have been told explicitly or implicitly that they are not meant to be anything more than the minimum. Providing a support system for all students is crucial, but it is especially so for the systematically disadvantaged.</p> <p>This bill would be a major step towards remedying these systemic and institutional barriers that tens of thousands of students are living under. It has the potential to address mental health challenges for a diverse set of students and communities as opposed to the strictly suburban vacuum where resources are usually concentrated (Section 1, 1b). For gifted minority students in particular, these inequities are compounded by the stress of “achieving greatness” without the necessary support systems to facilitate obtaining those goals in a healthy manner. The pilot program is crucial because it will equip students confronted by these challenges with the skills to navigate them in a way that is best for their specific situation.</p> <p>We cannot afford to overlook the mental health needs of the disempowered youth who will be our future. I hope you will support HB25-1160 as a means of taking the steps to ensure that marginalized students like myself and those in my community have the tools and resources we need to succeed holistically. Thank you for your consideration.</p>
<p>Ingrid Moore</p>	<p>I strongly support this bill. We need to do SOMETHING about the mental health crisis in young people.</p>

<p>For themselves</p>	<p>This bill is a good way to try something with a relevant sample size, that only lasts 1.5 yrs, and may provide important data to inform future legislation.</p> <p>The fiscal note of \$1.1M should be considered an investment in the future of Colorado's youth.</p> <p>Please vote YES to pass this bill.</p> <p>Thank you!</p>
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