CONGRESSMAN
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The *Suicide Prevention for At-Risk K-12 Students (SPARKS) Act* would strengthen youth suicide prevention by helping U.S. public schools implement programs that reflect the cultures, experiences, and needs of the students they serve.

Youth suicide remains a serious public health concern. In 2023, suicide was the second-leading cause of death among people ages 10 to 24 in the United States, up 41% since 1999. However, suicide risks and rates disproportionately affect youth from marginalized and underserved communities. While rates among White youth have declined, suicide deaths and risk have remained high and have risen sharply for minoritized and underserved youth. American Indian and Alaska Native youth have the highest suicide death rates among racial groups, while suicide deaths and related risks have significantly risen among Black youth.

Research shows that prevention efforts are most effective when they reflect the values, strengths, and needs of the communities they serve. Yet culturally tailored suicide risk assessment tools and youth prevention programs remain limited. Although current federally funded school-based prevention programs improve access and show efficacy in generally reducing youth suicide risk and rates, they do not explicitly address disparities in youth suicide outcomes across communities. The *SPARKS Act* aims to address this gap.

The *SPARKS Act* would amend the Public Health Service Act to direct the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to fund evidence-based, culturally responsive, school-based suicide prevention programs and practices by:

- Requiring SAMHSA to identify evidence-based, culturally responsive, school-based programs
- Establishing a SAMHSA grant opportunity for two-year implementation and evaluation of such programs,
- Requiring SAMHSA to provide technical assistance in suicide prevention, culturally responsive youth programming, program evaluation, and adaptation of universal evidence-based programs to meet the needs of specific communities,
- Requiring SAMHSA to report findings to Congress to inform future policymaking

This bill would not only authorize funding but also support grantees in implementing programs appropriately, rigorously evaluating their effectiveness, and consistently collecting and analyzing data to strengthen the evidence base.

By building evidence and supporting culturally responsive, school-based prevention, the *SPARKS Act* would help schools and communities better address youth suicide risk and provide support that respects students' beliefs, practices, cultural and linguistic needs, and life experiences.