

## **Mental Health Crisis**

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Have you ever had a mental illness like depression or anxiety, or have you known of someone that has had mental illness? Did they get the help that they needed or was it pushed off because it was not important? Some people think that it is congress' fault. In Congress Must Invest in Student Mental Health Tanya Ang (2022) thinks that Congress must invest in mental health issues with college students. Ang goes on to tell us many college students have spoken out about how there are not enough options for them. Campuses can only invest so much congress needs to help a little. What are some options for people that need help? I completely agree with the statement that congress must help in the fight against mental health because people have been asking for this and I understand that there are some options but not enough. It should be one of the top priorities for congress and colleges because college students are the future.

They say that covid has not affected the mental health of college students. The author Tanya Ang (2022) says “As students in higher education continue to speak more openly about their growing mental health struggles, leaders both on and off campus must pay attention”. I agree because like I said it takes a lot of bravery to talk about mental illness. Opening up about something like mental health is hard because it shows a weakness. If college students are openly talking about it, we should all pay attention to what they are saying. “We should always be talking about mental health. It is one of the best things you can do to prevent suicide,” said Kelsey Pacetti, a senior majoring in social work at the University of Wisconsin.” (Pappano,2022). This quote shows it from a student's perspective. How just someone having to talk to a counselor or a number to call can drastically change the outcome of a student's life. Brains way (2022) says “The suicide rate for college students is reportedly 7 per 100,000 or approximately 1,100 individuals annually.” This fact is why congress and leaders outside of the campuses should invest in a change. Colleges cannot do it alone; they do not have enough money or enough staff to try and reach every student that needs help.

That leads me to my next point of what colleges can do to help this mental health problem. The big issue here is that people that are there for mental support cannot be reached. It is like calling someone to come fix your heater because it broke and being put on hold and waiting for everyone else to be helped before you. Ang (2022) who is a higher learner advocate with over 20 years of experience says “Mental health support should be as accessible as faculty office hours. We are falling gravely short.” There must be an option for students to reach out for help. Like Ang said, we are falling behind on that. Megan Leonhardt (2022) says “In these challenging times, many of the nation’s 16 million college students are turning to their campus counseling services for help—only to encounter limited staff, red tape, restrictions on the length of services, and long wait time.” That is not a good thing at all but there are ways we could help alleviate these issues. It might take a while, but it will be worth it. One of the ways Leonhardt (2022) says “We need more and more clinicians than we ever needed before. And we need to start getting people excited about entering a career in mental health when they're young,’ says Brett Donnelly.” However, we need a more immediate action that would help students right now and a solution for a future one. It is not a bad solution; it will just take too much time. Leonhardt (2022) also says “peer-to-peer programs like Active Minds can help provide support.” Peer solutions would be a great idea because peers can understand what you might be going through because they are in the same situation. It is also easily accessible, and it is a way to make friends that will help you and have good intentions for you. This shows that there are solutions to our mental health crisis. We just need someone like congress to get a jump on it before it is too late.

If mental illness has been an issue for a long time, you would think they would have put some money into helping people. Ang (2022) says “Congress must act quickly by significantly funding the Garrett Lee Smith Campus Suicide Prevention Grant. It is the only federal program specifically available to support campus mental health needs.” Which means they have put some money into trying to help but the issue is that it is only 7 million that is their annual budget. Sadly 7 million can only reach a small portion of people. SAMHSA (2021) says “Twenty-five (25) colleges are receiving the GLS awards

through SAMHSA's annual appropriation totaling \$2.5 million. ARP funding of \$741,252 expands the program to reach an additional eight colleges and universities." Do not get me wrong, that is a huge achievement and a great start. However out of the thousands of colleges in America very few are being covered by it. So, either congress needs to contribute more money to this grant or find another solution.

Although I have talked about how congress has not done anything which is not true. They are doing the best they can with the resources they have. Like Ang (2022) says "Today's students, our nation's future workforce, deserve to have help available when and where they need it most. Congress can and should make it happen." Not that they have not done anything, they just need to do more. I will give you some examples of what they have done and are going to do. Larosa and Nuzum (2022) lay out some examples like how congress is going to invest in mental health and suicide prevention. Also expanding the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinical model and help states with guidance in these challenging times. Hopefully, that is enough, and they will stick to it even if it is a lot of money. I am telling you all of this to show I am on both sides, we still need more help, but we should all appreciate what they have done. It is a great start, but they really need to be the head of this problem and make this a serious priority if congress wants to fix it.

To sum up, some people think that congress must help in the mental health crisis of America, and I completely agree with them for these reasons. College students have talked about their issues, and we should all pay attention to that. In my personal experience the school I have gone to has had people there to help me. I cannot imagine going somewhere where there were not people there to help you. There are obvious solutions to our problems, we just need someone to start it off. We need congress to either go all in on one thing or drop it because it is not working and take a different path. At the same time at least, they are trying to do something about it. The next yourself or someone is struggling because they cannot get help with their mental issue you can blame congress.

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