

June, 2022 AHNA column

## **Historic Investments in Children's Mental Health**

By Rep. Matt Ritter

Addressing the growing mental health needs of Connecticut's children was a top priority for me this legislative session. The COVID-19 pandemic heightened concerns for parents, healthcare professionals and teachers who have all experienced frustration at the system's failure to adequately meet the increasing mental health challenges facing our children.

Thanks to the hard work and commitment by so many of my colleagues to this critical issue, bipartisan legislation ([HB5001](#)) passed by the General Assembly will help ensure that every child that needs help with their mental health will get it. The bill addresses this crisis in a comprehensive way by looking to increase the number of providers and services available.

Historic funding and resource investments for these important initiatives are specifically being targeted to:

- Assisting local schools in expanded mental health staff and access to care
- Providing mental health training to parents, students, and pediatricians
- Helping school-based health centers develop new mental health programming
- Creating new walk-ins for mental health emergencies
- Establishing a new position at the Healthcare Advocate to help families navigate care
- Expanding a 24/7 emergency mental health response
- Increasing state oversight and coordination of children's mental health needs
- Expanding mentorship opportunities

In cities, suburbs and our rural areas, children desperately need better access to mental health services and support. In order to create a more healthy Connecticut for all, it is vital that we fill the gaps in our children's mental and behavioral health system.

The pandemic has clearly shined a spotlight on the pediatric mental health crisis across the country. Here in Connecticut, this legislation will help children and families get the care they need.

As always, please contact me if I can ever be of any assistance. I can be reached at [Matthew.Ritter@cga.ct.gov](mailto:Matthew.Ritter@cga.ct.gov), on Facebook [@RepresentativeMattRitter](#) or by phone at (860) 240-8489 if you have any questions or concerns.