

From the House

Our Children's Mental Health Must Be A Priority

By Rep. Matt Ritter

One of the many things we have learned during the COVID-19 pandemic is that our children's mental health has greatly suffered as remote learning and limited socialization exposed the fragile nature of childhood development.

To help meet this critical and growing challenge, I recently convened a forum on mental health care for children at which legislators heard testimony from state health care providers, agencies, and child advocates. It was made quite clear there are not nearly enough services or children's behavioral health professionals to help our kids, and that the problem has grown exponentially over the past 20 months.

It is undeniable we are at a crisis point and we must find solutions, both in the short term and over the long term, and I intend to make the issue of our children's mental health a priority when the 2022 legislative session convenes in February. The problem is complex and the answers are even more complicated, but it is imperative we take action soon.

We heard that more school-based mental health services are needed along with an increase in both out-patient and in-home options. In addition to investing more funding in mental health care, we need to ensure health insurance plans, particularly Medicaid, recognize and prioritize coverage for such services.

We also must find ways to encourage career development in the mental health field. There are far too many children awaiting care because of the shortage of mental health professionals such as clinical social workers.

It is often said that "our children are our future." It may sound a bit trite, yet it is an ultimate truth and we have a collective responsibility as a society to help each child flourish. It's long overdue that we fully recognize that mental health is every bit as important to their overall development and growth.

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