

Gov. Pritzker Signs Legislation to Advance Mental Health Awareness in Classrooms

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CHICAGO — Building on efforts to expand mental health services, Governor JB Pritzker today signed House Bill 1778 into law, helping to prevent teen suicide in high schools, colleges and universities by combatting mental health crises. The legislation was championed by students from Naperville Central, who formed the nonprofit Beyond Charity, to raise mental health awareness.

“As many students have spent more time isolated from friends, teachers, and even family, it is more important than ever they have resources to remind them they are not alone,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “Thanks to the legislation I am signing today, next year, all middle school, high school, and public university student IDs will feature the numbers for crisis hotlines. Every student – regardless of their grade, school, and struggles – will carry an affirmation that mental health matters – with a life-saving resource in their back pocket.”

Named after the Naperville nonprofit, the Beyond Charity Law requires public high schools and institutions of higher education to add contact information for suicide prevention on school IDs. The legislation will ensure that students in sixth through 12th grade, as well as colleges and universities have contact information for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, the Crisis Text Line, and either the Safe2Help Illinois or a local suicide prevention hotline on their ID cards.

“I am very excited to see the Beyond Charity bill become law! This bill will have a large impact on students, showing them that there are resources available to support them,” said Aparna Ramakrishnan, President of Beyond Charity and Senior at Naperville Central High School. “Thank you to the Governor, Representative Yang-Rohr, and Representative Mussman for your support in passing this important piece of legislation. Thank you to my amazing team of peer leaders and my wonderful family who continue to support our mission and goals. Beyond Charity hopes to continue passing legislation to continue removing the stigma around mental health.”

“Young people faced a lot of stress this past year and a half. As they return to school this fall, it’s so important for them to have the resources they might need in a mental health crisis,” said State Senator Tom Cullerton (D-Villa Park). “Something as simple as a close-at-hand crisis hotline number can help prevent a tragedy. I thank the governor for signing this measure into law today.”

“By adding suicide prevention numbers on student identification cards, our schools can potentially help save someone’s life,” said State Representative Janet Yang Rohr (D-Naperville). “Ensuring that students have easy access to these lifesaving hotlines and resources is just one step in the larger fight to combat youth suicide rates and ensure that every Illinois resident has access to quality mental health care. I am proud to have sponsored this important measure and to have the full support of Illinois’ House of Representative behind this legislation.”