

though bullying and harassment is prevalent for these students, they and their families have limited legal recourse for that kind of discrimination. I believe our students deserve better. The amendment we will be voting on will help to tackle this problem.

The student non-discrimination amendment would prohibit discrimination and harassment in public schools based on actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. The amendment would also prohibit any retaliation for lodging a complaint of discrimination. That would give our LGBT students who are suffering from bullying and harassment legal recourse, and it would allow Federal authorities to address discrimination.

This amendment would offer LGBT students similar protections that currently exist for students who are bullied based on race, gender, religion, disability, or country of national origin. Unless you think LGBT students don't deserve protection from discrimination the way these other students do, this should be easy to support. This amendment is absolutely critical for expanding protections for LGBT students. Again, I thank the junior Senator from Minnesota for his tremendous work.

I know some of our Republican colleagues have argued that taking steps to prevent bullying would only create lawsuits. But I believe these students deserve justice. Giving students and families legal recourse would help provide that.

Under this amendment, the process for legal recourse would be similar to title IX, which actually has been on the books since 1972. In the majority of title IX cases, a school is more than willing to fix the problem so it no longer engages in discriminatory practices. After all, school leaders want to do the right thing and end bullying or harassment in their classrooms. They want to make sure their school is safe for a particular group of students. They want to make sure students are not discriminated against simply because of who they are. With this amendment, this same process would be afforded to LGBT students.

I have also heard some critics of this amendment say there is no need to focus on LGBT students. They don't want to define who would be covered in an anti-discrimination amendment. But that logic doesn't follow what we already know works. There is a reason the civil rights laws of our country clearly define who is protected from discrimination. For example, our civil rights laws make it clear that it is unlawful to discriminate based on race and gender. A generic anti-discrimination policy will not cut it. A vague policy would lead to years of litigation about who is and who is not protected and what legal standards should apply. Making meaningful progress to prevent bullying, harassment, and discrimination requires us to clearly define who will be protected.

We know LGBT students are being bullied. They are being harassed. They are being discriminated against. Ignoring that fact with vague language doesn't help those students; it does them a real disservice, and it is wrong.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment. The pain physical and emotional abuse can cause is tragic.

In Ohio, a young man named Zach is an openly gay student. Since he was in the third grade, he has been called names at school. That abuse has escalated since then. When he was 16, Zach was physically attacked and repeatedly punched by another student during his third-period class. In a video from the ACLU, Zach's mom said it is not that Zach attended a bad school. She said: "It's just not a good school for gay or lesbian children."

It should not matter what school a child attends; all students deserve a safe learning environment. Bullying and harassment take that away from too many of our Nation's students.

I want to take a moment to note the historical significance of this debate and the vote we will be taking on shortly. A few weeks ago, the Supreme Court settled a question that for decades has been an issue of debate in our country. After years of fighting for equal rights, LGBT couples finally have the guarantee of marriage equality nationwide and the protections that all married couples enjoy.

I am proud of how far our country has come. Since the Court's ruling, this—right now, today—will be the first vote this body takes on legislation aimed at ending discrimination against LGBT individuals and in this case discrimination against LGBT children in our schools. Surely we can agree that a minority group of students who have long endured bullying, harassment, and discrimination deserves the same protections we afford other groups of students. There is no excuse for a school or for a United States Senator to stand by as our kids endure harassment and discrimination that puts their academic success and emotional well-being in jeopardy. The country will be watching.

I urge our colleagues to support this amendment and give students across the country the assurance that we are on their side.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, I wish to thank Chairman ALEXANDER and Ranking Member MURRAY for their excellent leadership as stewards of this important bipartisan effort. In my conversations with parents, educators, and advocates across my State, one theme

prevails: We must reform this outdated law. This bipartisan legislation before us, while not perfect, is a step in the right direction.

I am glad my language was included in the substitute amendment to address conflict resolution and crisis intervention services in schools. It will provide support and the ability of school districts to provide suicide, trafficking, trauma, and violence prevention models. Such models will assist educators as they foster positive school climates so that students can enter school excited and ready to learn.

However, I hope we can also advance my amendment No. 2171, which would support those schools where such preventions are needed the most. My amendment will restore access and make improvements to school and mental health support grants under an existing program in ESEA—the integration of schools and mental health systems. Unfortunately, the bill before us eliminates this program simply because of recent budget cuts. Those budget cuts have allowed for the diversion of its funding to other priorities. This program, however, is more important than ever today.

I am not calling for new or expanded funding or even a new program. The funding conversation should take place during the appropriations process. But for these purposes, we must make sure the program's authorization is not eliminated, as students across this country and students in my State critically need these integrated services that help them deal with the effects of poor educational environments as well as the effects of toxic stress and trauma.

The need to address this problem is something I have heard repeatedly since becoming North Dakota's Senator and previously in my role as North Dakota's attorney general. Through my personal experiences with affected children, school leaders, and tribal representatives, I have focused on making sure all children have the ability to succeed and overcome obstacles associated with suicide, trauma, violence, and stress on their mental health.

In May of 2015, Futures Without Violence, alongside partners such as the Alliance for Excellent Education, the National Education Association, and the National PTA, released a report entitled "Safe, Healthy, and Ready to Learn" that detailed how unhealthy school climates, exposure to violence, and the effects of trauma reduce academic success. As a result of such conditions, students with two or more adverse childhood experiences are more than twice as likely to repeat a grade. Students exposed to violence are at a greater risk of dropping out or having difficulty in school. Children exposed to violence scored lower on tests of verbal ability and comprehension, reading and math skills, and overall achievement on standardized tests.

As a member of the Indian Affairs Committee, I can attest that nowhere

are adverse childhood experiences more common than in schools serving this country's Native communities and Native American tribes. The suicide rate for young adults aged 15 to 34 years is 2½ times higher than the national average.

In South Dakota, from December 2014 to May 2015, the Oglala Sioux Tribe lost nine—nine—of their young people to suicide between the ages of 12 and 24. At least 103—I want to repeat that number—103 attempts were made by young people aged 12 to 24 just in those few months.

North Dakota has had a similar experience with suicide. Five young people—three teenagers and two 25-year-olds—on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation took their own lives within a 2-month period.

Much like North and South Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, and Alaska's suicide rate has increased dramatically in recent years—jumping 70 percent in 10 years, with large increases among middle and high school students.

As populations have increased in the West, violent crime has similarly risen 121 percent in some areas. Through drug crimes, gunrunning, gang activity, and limited capacity of law enforcement, human trafficking has become epidemic, with 83 percent of all victims in the United States being American. How can we expect children to learn when they face such obstacles as these? This is an injustice.

We must make sure our schools have the means to partner with health systems and provide preventive measures and family engagement models for improving school environments and mental health stress. Unfortunately, schools are often the last line of defense for our country's most vulnerable students. My amendment would simply preserve a voluntary program that helps schools provide children stability and the tools necessary to handle mental stress.

I understand the call for Federal streamlining and local flexibility. For North Dakota, strengthening local efficiency is a top priority. However, this particular program should not be a part of that streamlining. This authorization is about updating a civil rights law based on helping all—even the most disadvantaged—students achieve and have access to a better future.

But for many of our States, those disadvantaged students are also owed a Federal trust responsibility. While this language would protect a grant program that is accessible to all, the services provided under this amendment target issues epidemic to Indian Country. As such, it would work to uphold the distinct trust responsibility of this government to provide educational resources to Native children. Much like the amendment from the senior Senator from Montana, which the Senate adopted last week, I hope the Senate will similarly protect this program.

By helping schools coordinate with health professionals specializing in ad-

ressing the effects of traumatic events and mental stress, we will secure for our most disadvantaged the equal opportunity they deserve—that equal opportunity to learn and to achieve.

I want to tell you a quick story. The first year I was elected, I had an opportunity to visit with a lot of North Dakota constituents who came into my office. I remember distinctly the day the grade school principals came to visit me, and I thought that I would prepare for this meeting—that I would prepare on No Child Left Behind. I shared a lot of their concerns, and I was ready to talk about No Child Left Behind. That is not what they wanted to talk about. One principal told me a story about two young boys who were in second and third grade who had ridden the bus that morning and beaten up two little girls. When they got to school, the principal asked them why they would ever do that. They said: Well, you understand that last night my dad beat up my mom and he went to jail. They wanted to visit their dad.

How prepared is a school district to deal with that situation? If we do not engage the mental health community, our schools will continue to be those first responders, ill prepared to deal with the trauma of that life. We have to begin to integrate these programs, and we have to look at what is happening with trauma and stress and the effects trauma and stress have on learning and the ability to succeed.

I understand and can completely appreciate and support the idea that we need to streamline programs. I think this is a program whose time has come. We should fund this program. That is a conversation for the Appropriations Committee. We have to begin to emphasize the conditions in which children live if we are going to educate all of our children equally.

I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting this amendment.

I ask unanimous consent that the Futures Without Violence report, "Safe, Healthy, and Ready to Learn," be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

SAFE, HEALTHY, AND READY TO LEARN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dr. Martin Luther King, at the crossroads of this nation's civil rights movement more than 50 years ago, talked about the "fierce urgency of now." Today, more than ever, every child deserves equality of access and opportunity that will prepare him or her to compete in the changing economies and realities of the 21st century. Yet, for too many children, exposure to violence and trauma can deny them both access and opportunity. Forty-six million children in the United States will be exposed to violence, crime, abuse, or psychological trauma in a given year: two out of every three children in this country. They are our sons, daughters, grandsons, granddaughters, nieces, and nephews. They are our future.

There is an undeniable urgency of now to shine the light on these children and, even more importantly, prevent our children from exposure to violence. We owe it to them to

give them the opportunity to live up to their full potential. We should not wait, we cannot wait, and we must not wait.

In partnership with leaders from throughout the health, education, justice, and child development fields, Futures Without Violence (FUTURES), with the support of The California Endowment, Blue Shield of California Foundation, and the Lisa and John Pritzker Family Fund, has spent the last year working to develop public policy solutions to prevent and address childhood exposure to violence and trauma. We examined research, consulted with experts across the country, and convened a multi-disciplinary working group to develop a comprehensive set of recommendations designed to combat this silent epidemic.

Children's exposure to violence, trauma, and "toxic stress" can have a permanent negative effect on the chemical and physical structures of their brain, causing cognitive impairments such as trouble with attention, concentration, and memory. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) research documents the short- and long-term connections between exposure to violence and other adversity and poor health and educational outcomes, such as increased absenteeism in school and changes in school performance. Individuals who have experienced six or more ACEs die, on average, 20 years earlier than those who have none. We know that the effects of this trauma are playing out in numerous ways every day.

The good news is that we know what works to prevent harm and heal children. Our collective task is to identify and elevate the effective policies, programs, and practices that are working and advance them at the federal, state, and local level. This report is designed to do just that.

FUTURES is especially grateful to the thoughtful work and commitment of our policy working group, which made the report possible. The group is unique in its diverse membership and in the willingness of its participants to cross boundaries and recognize the interconnectedness of multiple issues. From reforming school discipline practices and creating positive school climates to combating child abuse and promoting children's physical, emotional and mental health, the group worked to examine and lift up core strategies to meet the needs of the whole child, to address trauma in children's lives, and to create conditions to allow our children to thrive and succeed.

GOALS

The working group developed a set of recommendations that will support each of these seven goals:

1. Invest early in parents and young children
2. Help schools promote positive school climates, be trauma sensitive, and raise achievement
3. Train educators, health care workers, and other child-serving professionals about preventing and responding to youth violence and trauma
4. Prevent violence and trauma
5. Improve intra- and inter-governmental coordination and alignment
6. Increase the availability of trauma-informed services for children and families
7. Increase public awareness and knowledge of childhood violence and trauma

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following summarizes the key recommendations for each goal:

No. 1—Invest early in parents and young children. The federal government should support states, local jurisdictions, and tribes in providing parents, legal guardians, and other caregivers the resources necessary to help their children thrive. A multi-generational

approach to comprehensive and evidence-based services and trauma-informed care promotes positive caretaking, reduces inequities, enhances family cohesion, and interrupts the cycle of intergenerational trauma. We recommend expanding the federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) and implementing a two generation approach to addressing ACEs, child abuse, and domestic violence. We also suggest modifying Medicaid and child welfare financing formulas to extend services to parents to address their own experience of trauma.

No. 2—Help schools promote positive school climates, be trauma sensitive, and raise achievement. The federal government should provide significant resources and incentives for states and local jurisdictions to create connected communities and positive school climates that are trauma-sensitive to keep students healthy and in school, involved in positive social networks, and out of the juvenile justice system. Such investments should increase opportunity and close achievement gaps, promote health, resilience, social and emotional learning, and engage the school personnel necessary to effectuate a positive learning environment. We recommend using the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to support the creation of positive school climates; supporting full-service community schools that include school-based health centers; adopting inclusive disciplinary policies that involve the community; reconsidering school safety strategies and prioritize investing resources in students' emotional health and social connections; providing assistance to school districts in their efforts to prevent and appropriately respond to incidents of bullying; and having the United States Department of Education design and disseminate a practice guide that offers school-wide strategies and best practices for creating trauma sensitive schools.

No. 3—Train educators, health care workers, and other child-serving professionals about preventing and responding to youth violence and trauma. States and other accrediting bodies should support training and certification of child- and youth-serving professionals to effectively respond to children's exposure to violence with a coordinated and trauma-informed approach. Our report urges that school personnel should be trained on implementing effective academic and behavioral practices, such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports and social and emotional learning, and providing pediatricians and staff in community health settings the tools they need to serve traumatized youth.

No. 4—Prevent violence and trauma. Federal, state, and local governments and tribes should increase incentives and expand violence prevention efforts to reduce children's exposure to violence. Research and strategies should be interwoven among the fields of community violence, child abuse, school violence, sexual assault, and domestic violence. Specific policy recommendations are as follows: expanding funding for domestic violence prevention and response services within the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act; providing greater technical assistance to health care providers so they can effectively deliver universal education to parents and caregivers about the impact of exposure to violence on youth and deliver more integrated care to children who may already be exposed to violence; expanding targeted prevention programs focused on healthy relationships among youth developed jointly by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Office on Violence Against Women; engaging men and boys in prevention; and supporting resilient and healthy communities.

No. 5—Improve intra- and inter-governmental coordination and alignment. Federal, state, and local governments and tribes should better coordinate youth violence prevention and early intervention approaches among themselves and with non-governmental organizations, particularly as it relates to school/community and public/private sector coordination. We recommend the creation of a White House task force to identify specific youth violence and trauma prevention goals, make recommendations on how federal agency resources can be used to meet those goals, and provide guidance to state and local partners. In addition, the federal government should include incentives in relevant federal grant applications for states and localities to demonstrate collaboration in service delivery.

No. 6—Increase the availability of trauma-informed services for children and families. It is time to incentivize and fund states, localities, and tribes to scale up the availability of trauma-informed services for children and their families exposed to violence. These services should support the implementation of two-generation, trauma-informed approaches, coordinate efforts among schools, homes, and communities, and ensure gender-specific and culturally competent practices. We recommend permitting federal entitlement programs to support child trauma assessment and intervention, such as home-based services and crisis intervention, that provide for child well-being, family stability, and community health. The federal government should provide specific support and attention to youth in the juvenile justice system, in foster care, and to those who are homeless.

No. 7—Increase public awareness and knowledge of childhood violence and trauma. Federal, state, and local governments and tribes should support public education and engagement campaigns to increase awareness of the adverse effects of childhood exposure to violence and trauma. The campaigns should describe action people can take to prevent harm, and promote effective solutions. We recommend that the federal government, in coordination with the states, conduct a mass media campaign that highlights the impact of ACEs and helps to reduce the stigma attached to those who seek professional help.

We know that meaningful change will not happen overnight, and we recognize that budgets are tight at all levels of government. However, inaction is not an option—not when tens of millions of children are affected by violence and trauma each year. We know what works. We know that these investments will save money and will prevent many children from suffering. This report provides a blueprint for what needs to be done. It is now up to all of us, as policymakers, educators, advocates, and parents, to take action to ensure that our children's future is bright.

Ms. HEITKAMP. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from North Dakota for bringing up a critically important issue. The need for counseling and mental health resources in our schools cannot be overstated. There are so many kids who appear to be slow learners and have problems that can be traced directly to these issues.

I know that teachers aren't trained to be psychologists and psychiatrists. Many of them are struggling just to teach. So I think the resources that

the Senator from North Dakota is talking about are absolutely essential, and I hope her amendment prevails. I will be happy to support it.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, we come together every few years to debate education. Why does the Federal Government get into the conversation about grade schools and high schools? Because 50 years ago we created programs sending Federal money to these schools.

In my State, about 5 percent of all the money spent on education comes from Washington. The rest of it comes from State and local sources. Sending this money to schools was part of a program for accountability back in the 1960s. The problems we faced were largely twofold, problems of poverty and the resulting difficulties that children had in school and problems with racial discrimination. So we tried to resolve these by sending resources to States and holding them accountable if they received Federal money to move toward improving test scores and performance for children and breaking down the walls of segregation.

It is 50 years later. We have tried so many different approaches to this, and under President George W. Bush, a conservative Republican, there was a surprising new approach called No Child Left Behind. What was surprising is that a conservative Republican President actually called for a bigger role of the Federal Government when it came to education.

President Bush felt that we should hold schools and teachers accountable, that we should test to make sure they were making progress, and frankly, call them out if they were not. It was a pretty bold and controversial idea. Now we come together years later in an effort to do it differently. This bill before us, the Every Child Achieves Act, basically shifts the pendulum to the other side and says that now we are going to give it back to the States to measure the performance and progress of schools and intervene where necessary.

I think this is a worthy effort. We may find that we have gone too far in moving it all back to the States and away from the multiple tests that face school districts under No Child Left Behind, but we are engaging in this new approach in the hopes that it will be better and fairer and that more kids in America will get a good education. That is generally why I think we are here on this floor.

There is one aspect of it which I think we should still maintain, and that is the question or issue of accountability. Senators MURPHY of Connecticut, BOOKER of New Jersey, COONS of Delaware, and WARREN of Massachusetts filed an amendment which I have joined with to insert meaningful accountability measures in this bill, including identifying the 5 percent lowest performing schools—high schools where less than two-thirds of the students graduate—and subgroups of students who are not doing well.