



FIGHTING for PENNSYLVANIA FAMILIES

The PREP For All Students Act (S. 4259)

U.S. Senator Bob Casey and U.S. Representative Susan Wild

Little has been done to integrate certain populations, including children at various developmental stages and individuals with disabilities, into emergency preparedness planning in schools. In recent years, there has been an uptick in extreme weather and natural disasters and in the United States, including flooding, wildfires and severe thunderstorms. Additionally, 2021 was the worst year for on-campus violence since the Columbine school shooting in 1999. Concerning active shooters, the Department of Homeland Security recommends that students and personnel in schools and child care settings “Run, Hide, and Fight.” These strategies can exacerbate danger for young children in prekindergarten and child care centers, and can exclude and put at-risk students with a wide range of disabilities.

This is not a trivial concern: Nearly 61 percent of eligible children aged 3-5, over 7.7 million students, were enrolled in school in 2019. Additionally, during the 2019-2020 school year, 14 percent of all public-school students received special education services. Increasingly schools are developing protocols to respond to emergency events, and as they do, it is critical that these protocols are inclusive. Educational institutions must be prepared to protect all students, regardless of age, developmental stage and ability.

The **PREP for All Students Act** will ensure that public schools, early child care education centers and institutions of higher education have the tools they need to develop inclusive emergency preparedness protocols. Specifically, the bill would:

- Establish a Federal Advisory Council composed of federal agencies, youth with disabilities and mental health considerations, parents, educators and advocates to develop guidelines and recommendations for the implementation of accessible, developmentally appropriate, culturally aware and trauma-informed emergency preparedness protocols;
- Require the Council to submit a report to Congress that includes, but is not limited to, information about trauma-informed preparedness drills, emergency communications, school safety technology and training for educators, early child care and education staff, administrators and support personnel. This includes training to address racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, religious and disability implicit biases and training to ensure the nondiscriminatory application of protocols and treatment of students; and
- Ensure that schools are provided with accurate information about the needs of specific populations of children, youth and employees during emergency events.

Supporting Organizations: National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Institute for Childhood Preparedness, National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), National Council on Independent Living (NCIL), National Disability Rights Network (NDRN), National Association of the Deaf (NAD), Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD), Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN), Council of Parent and Attorney Advocates (COPAA)