

FAV for HB0740 Public Schools - School-Based Mental Health Services - Full-Time Therapist The (Kayla R. Johnson Act)

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Dear Committee

I'm writing my letter of support not just as a constituent but as a Mental Health Therapist whose life has been directly touched by the issues addressed in **HB0740 Public Schools - School-Based Mental Health Services - Full-Time Therapist (aka The Kayla R. Johnson Act)**

I have been a School-based Mental Health Therapist for almost 15 years and Private Practice Therapist for almost 6 and have seen the benefits firsthand. Students are coming to school dealing with more than teachers and school staff can imagine. The overwhelming needs are rising and that is often taxing the existing School Based Mental Health team including School Social Workers, School Psychologist, School Counselors, and School Community Coordinators.

I have a history of personal battles with mental health and while in high school I could have benefited from services within my school. The access to quality services that felt safe and the stigma in the African American community made it extremely difficult. **HB0740 Public Schools - School-Based Mental Health Services - Full-Time Therapist (aka The Kayla R. Johnson Act)** offers real, practical solutions that would benefit countless others. It would help to change the narrative on academic achievement, improve healthy social emotional learning, and most importantly help to decrease the stigma on mental health. The stigma of mental health has been something I am extremely passionate about and have worked most of my career to combat. Having a Mental Health Therapist that can be part of the school community daily allows for easier access, services in a more familiar and safe space, as well as normalizing help seeking behaviors. It's not just policy on paper — it's hope for families, safety for communities, and a step toward protecting our future.

I urge you to champion this bill and ensure it becomes law. Your support could mean the difference between hardship and opportunity for so many. Thank you for your leadership and for listening to the voices of those you represent.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nikita A. Parson LCSW-C". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nikita A. Parson, LCSW-C