

Dear Bipartisan Task Force on Gun Violence Prevention and Children's Safety, Mental Health Working Group,

I just signed Yale School of Public Health's petition "[Promote early screening of mental health illness](#)" on Change.org.

Senator Harp, Representative Wood, and Distinguished Members of the Mental Health Working Group: We are testifying as students, staff members, and faculty of Yale School of Public Health who want to increase access to quality mental health services in the State of Connecticut for those affected by the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School and for other current and future victims of gun violence. We believe that access to mental health care services is an underserved need for Connecticut residents. We commend the State of Connecticut in being a pioneer in its dedication to health care access, opting to expand its Medicaid program, which will greatly increase access to mental health care services to tens of thousands of Connecticut residents. However, we believe that quality mental health care should be accessible to all 3.6 million residents. The children, families, and greater Connecticut community members, including our emergency responders, affected by the tragedy on December 14th, 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary School undoubtedly need support, and we are writing to you on their behalf. We believe that a stronger priority in the public agenda focusing on quality mental health care access is imperative for the future of individual, community, and state-level wellbeing. If residents do not believe that quality mental health care is available and accessible in their community, they will be hesitant to seek services or be lost in our complex health care system. We do not want Connecticut residents to be at risk for the potentially fatal outcomes with which untreated mental health illness can be associated. Moving forward, we believe that the following proposals be implemented by the State: · 1) Promote early screening of mental health illness · 2) Address cost-related barriers to mental health care access for insured, uninsured, and under-insured patients · 3) Translate best practices from the Connecticut's Behavioral Health Partnership to address mental health care as a collaborative effort · 4) Provide continual financial support for mental health programs in schools, as they currently provide 70-80% of mental health services for Connecticut children ("Protecting the Health of Connecticut's Young People," Connecticut Association of School Based Health Centers, (October 2010), available at: http://www.ctschoolhealth.org/Announcements/view.asp?id=54&utm_source=target&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=fifty) Thank you for taking the time to critically review the points made here. As current and future leaders in the public health arena, we thank you for your consideration of the aforementioned proposals. We look forward to the hearing about our state's strengthened commitment to mental health.

Sincerely,
Yao Yang New Haven, Connecticut

There are now 4 signatures on this petition. Read reasons why people are signing, and respond to Yale School of Public Health by clicking here:

<http://www.change.org/petitions/promote-early-screening-of-mental-health-illness?response=6a3609aefab>