

Promoting Responsible Emergency Protocols (PREP) for All Students Act

Little has been done to integrate specific populations, such as children and youth at various developmental stages or children and youth with disabilities, into emergency preparedness planning in schools. From 2016 to 2018, there was an uptick in extreme weather and natural disasters and in the United States, including severe thunderstorms, flooding, wildfires and other potentially dangerous occurrences. Additionally, 2018 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 65 percent, or 8.64 million, of eligible children were enrolled in a preprimary program in 2017. During the 2017-2018 school year, 16 to 18 percent of children had a disability or developmental delay, including 14 percent of students in K- 12 and 11 percent of students in a post-baccalaureate program. Increasingly schools are developing protocols to respond to emergency events and firearm-related violence, and, as they do so, 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 in early child care and education centers, public schools and institutions of higher education.
- Require the Council to submit a report to Congress that includes, but is not limited to, information about trauma-informed preparedness drills, emergency communications, the use of school safety technology and training for training for educators, early childcare and education staff, administrators and support personnel, including training addressing racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, religious, and disability implicit biases and other training to ensure the nondiscriminatory application of protocols and treatment of students
- Ensure that schools are provided with accurate information about the needs of specific populations of children, youth and employees during emergency events.