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## **Norwalk Public Schools Secures \$135,000 Grant to Continue Providing Mental Health Services For Students Throughout the Summer**

Norwalk, Conn. (Aug. 30, 2023) -- The need for mental health supports for school-aged children doesn't disappear when the bell rings on the final day of classes. Norwalk Public Schools was recently awarded \$135,000 in state grants funded through the Summer Mental Health Supports Grant Program to provide necessary mental health services for our students outside of the regular school year.

Earlier this year, the Connecticut General Assembly passed Public Act 22-47 that awarded \$8 million in American Rescue Plan Acts (ARPA) funds to local and regional school district and summer programs as the governing body recognized the need to continue providing mental health services throughout the summer.

"The social and emotional health of our scholars is of the utmost importance, and we're grateful that the state General Assembly recognized this need to continue supporting our scholars with mental health services during the summer months," said Dr. Alexandra Estrella, Superintendent of Norwalk Public Schools.

Grants were awarded for three consecutive fiscal years. Norwalk Public Schools will receive \$50,000 each of the next two years, and \$35,000 in the third year. Eligible entities could apply for grants between \$10,000 to \$50,000 for the first fiscal year.

The grant will support two initiatives for Norwalk Public Schools. The funds will help build mental health supports during the summer that will be provided by district school counselors and social workers. The money will also go toward social emotional learning and workforce development curriculum writing to be used in everyday culture in grades 1-3 and 6-8.

The 2022 Norwalk Youth Survey, conducted by Norwalk Positive Directions and Norwalk ACTS, found 25% of high school students and 20% of seventh and eighth graders reported feeling sad or hopeless. The rate was higher among LGBTQ, female, Hispanic high school students, and middle school students of all races.

The survey also found that 11% of NPS students in grades 7-12 had considered suicide, and 6% had attempted suicide. While reported depression rates decreased from 2021 to 2022, the attempted suicide rate increased by 1.6% overall.