The Transition-to-Success Mentoring Act focuses on expanding resources for schools and community organizations to implement school-based mentoring programs for middle school students who have a below 2.0 grade point average or have been determined to need support due to academic or other factors. Middle school is a challenging time for students as they deal with new social situations, increasing levels of school work, and constantly changing environments, peers, and healthy development. Schools creating relationship-centric supports for middle school students who are at risk is critical to their academic success and social-emotional well-being in middle school, high school, and beyond. Mentors (or success coaches) build relationships with students, identify academic and personal goals, educate on school and career exploration, and work with families and school personnel to evaluate the student’s progress while identifying needs.

Summary
The Transition-to-Success Mentoring Act provides resources for schools to address the needs of students to help them navigate the rapid physical, emotional, developmental, and academic changes of middle school while guaranteeing them a mentor (success coach) who can advocate and collaborate with their families and school personnel to support positive academic and social progress. Research demonstrates that students often experience a decline in grades between their last year in elementary school and their first year in middle school, in addition to decreased self-esteem and self-perception. These factors when combined with pre-existing or additional negative risk-factors make middle school a time when schools must increase their supports for already vulnerable students. The Transition-to-Success Mentoring Act implements funds to establish, expand or provide technical assistance for eligible middle school students to be connected with a mentor (success coach) who identifies their academic, personal, college or career goals each year, identifies their progress, and supports their college or career exploration.

The bill would allow schools to access funding to establish, expand or support school-based mentoring programs for at-risk middle school students by:

- Establishing a Transition-to-Success mentoring program that would award grants to schools or community-based nonprofit organizations to provide school-based mentoring programs for students who are at risk to support their transition from middle school to high school.
- Creating a plan for success for middle school students who have a 2.0 grade point average or below or have been determined by parents or guardians, teachers or school personnel to be at-risk of academic failure, expressed interest in dropping out of school, experiencing substance abuse or misuse, are pregnant or a parent, have limited English proficiency, have come into contact with the juvenile justice system, are a gang member, or have a high absenteeism rate at school.
- Matching middle school students with a mentor (success coach) who assists the student in achieving their goals under the plan, identify areas of strengths and weaknesses and provide them with tools to improve their academic performance and support their involvement in school. The mentor also meets
with parents, guardians, and other school personnel to evaluate progress and revise goals, serving as an advocate for the student and a non-judgmental support.

- Training for school personnel mentors or volunteer community mentors to learn evidence-based best practices to support middle school students and properly understand the roles and responsibilities of a success coach. Additionally, providing eligible awardees the ability to screen, and match volunteer mentors with middle school students who are at-risk and provide support to their relationships.

**Key Talking Points**

- Middle school students are dealing with many changes in their life related to physical, academic, emotional, and social development. These developmental changes are especially challenging when there are other risk factors that the student is facing. This requires a tailored approach that allows mentors (success coaches) to build individualized plans to support academic and personal growth.

- Grants provided through the Transition-to-Success Mentoring Act would allow schools – alone or in partnership with nonprofit mentoring programs – to pair trained mentors with at-risk students. Mentors create plans for success for each student that includes the student’s academic, personal, and career exploration goals and a strategy on how the student can accomplish those goals.

- Mentors (success coaches) would receive quality training and background screening to support students and understand early adolescent development, how to support self-confidence, communicating with parents or guardians, and understanding middle school activities and services.

- Research has demonstrated that middle school students in mentoring programs were less likely to receive disciplinary referrals and were more likely to feel connected to their schools. This relationship-centric approach is critical in creating connection and supporting academic progress.

**Congressional Co-Sponsors**

In January 2019, Rep. André Carson (D-IN) introduced The Transition-to-Success Mentoring Act (H.R. 804).


MENTOR and its partners are working with interested Senate offices for a potential introduction of the companion bill.

**Supporters**

MENTOR is joined by partners in supporting The Transition-to-Success Mentoring Act, including (alphabetically):

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Central Indiana
- Center for Supportive Schools
- College Mentors for Kids
- Collaborative for Academic, Social, Emotional Learning (CASEL)