

Mentoring to Succeed Act (S. 65) **Senator Dick Durbin**

Youth facing risk encounter significant challenges, such as childhood poverty, underfunded schools, chronic absenteeism, disability, adverse childhood experiences, community violence, drug and alcohol abuse and misuse, multiple disciplinary actions, exclusionary discipline policies, and juvenile justice involvement. Without a strong support system, these challenges can lead to poor academic achievement and life outcomes. The COVID-19 pandemic has further disrupted academics, and it has increased isolation and loneliness—making the transition from high school to college and the workforce even more difficult. School-based mentoring programs serve as an effective strategy to help students thrive in school, college, career, and life. Our nation must invest in them to connect students to the resources and support they need to succeed.

The Need in Our Communities. According to a 2014 study by MENTOR, there are an estimated 16 million young people, including 9 million youth facing risk, who will reach 19 without ever having a mentor. These youth will miss out on the powerful effects of mentoring, including being less likely to skip a day of school and more likely to enroll in college, participate regularly in sports or extracurricular activities, volunteer regularly in their communities, and hold leadership positions. For example, researchers at the University of Chicago found that Youth Guidance’s school-based mentoring program, *Becoming a Man*, reduced rates of arrests for violent crime, improved school engagement, and increased high school graduation rates.

Workforce Readiness and Soft Skills. School-based mentoring programs can help youth develop valuable workforce skills that employers are seeking. A 2016 study found that eight in ten employers say social and emotional skills are the most important skills for success but are also the most difficult skills to find in job applicants.

The Solution: Pairing Students with Mentors. The federal government can strengthen investments in school-based mentoring programs to help youth facing risk develop the academic, social, and workforce skills that lead to success.

The Mentoring to Succeed Act of 2023 would:

- ***Invest in Mentoring Programs.*** Establish a five-year, competitive grant program that provides federal funding to establish, expand, or support school-based mentoring programs.
- ***Help Students Overcome Adversity and Trauma.*** Provide grant recipients with funding to train mentors in trauma-informed practices and interventions to increase student resilience and reduce juvenile justice involvement.
- ***Strengthen Workforce Readiness.*** Support partnerships with local businesses and private companies to help youth facing risk with hands-on career training and career exploration.
- ***Close the Opportunity Gap.*** Give preference to applicants that develop a plan to help prepare youth facing risk for college and the workforce.
- ***Support Capacity Building.*** Support partnerships with nonprofit, community-based, and faith-based organizations to increase the number of youth facing risk served.
- ***Enhance Student Success.*** Provide grant recipients with funding for program evaluation and identification of successful strategies.