

ACADEMIC Act

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The Assessing Children's Academic Development and the Emotional and Mental Health Implications of COVID-19 (ACADEMIC) Act would authorize a comprehensive, interagency study on the long-term impact of COVID-19 on student outcomes and well-being.

The Problem: The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the challenges students face when it comes to their academic achievement and overall health and wellbeing. Standardized test results from school-aged children and adolescents have fallen significantly compared to before the pandemic. Minority students were disproportionately impacted by lower test scores while third and fourth grade students reported the lowest test results of all academic grades due to their rapid switch to remote learning during their most critical years for reading and writing skills. The health and wellness of students have also been severely impacted by the pandemic as shown through more than 6,600 individuals between the ages of 10 and 24 years old committing suicide in 2020.¹ In fact, the U.S. Surgeon General released an advisory calling for more public-private-nonprofit coordination to address rapidly growing mental, emotional, development, or behavioral disorders exacerbated by the pandemic.

Unfortunately, during the recent Omicron surge, staffing shortages and virus outbreaks shut down in-person learning for some schools once again, resulting in further disruptions. As the country moves forward, it will be important to fully understand the effects of the pandemic on school-aged children and adolescents to determine how to best address learning loss and ongoing health issues going forward.

The Solution: The *ACADEMIC Act* would authorize the U.S. Department of Education, in coordination with other relevant federal agencies, to include a new longitudinal component on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student outcomes and well-being to an existing longitudinal educational study. This bill specifically:

- Authorizes the incorporation of this new interagency longitudinal component to an existing longitudinal educational study under the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), which is required to begin no later than two years after enactment;
- Measures the long-term impact of COVID-related school closures, remote learning, and other factors on pre-kindergarten, elementary and secondary school students, including academic achievement (learning loss), social-emotional wellbeing, and mental, behavioral, and physical health;
- Assesses a representative group of students, including residents of rural and urban localities, female and male students, and students from different grades, races, ethnicities, and incomes;
- Examines the impacts on specific subgroups of students including low-income students, military-connected students, students experiencing homelessness, students in foster care, students in the juvenile justice system, students with disabilities, students who are English learners, and migratory students; and
- Requires the Secretary of Education to release a preliminary summary of findings to the public no later than one year after the end of the data collection.

¹ <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/12/07/us-surgeon-general-issues-advisory-on-youth-mental-health-crisis-further-exposed-by-covid-19-pandemic.html>