

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Joins colleagues to introduce Bipartisan legislation to support eating disorder diagnosis and treatment

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The Anna Westin Legacy Act will permanently authorize the Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders, which provides training on how to identify eating disorders and support patients in recovery

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), and Thom Tillis (R-NC) introduced bipartisan legislation to authorize the Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders (the Center), which provides training and technical assistance to health care workers, teachers, and parents on how to identify eating disorders and support patients in recovery. The Center was created in 2018 after provisions from Baldwin, Klobuchar, and Capito's *Anna Westin Act* were [enacted](#) as part of the *21st Century CURES Act*.

“The Anna Westin Legacy Act is bipartisan legislation that will help ensure health care professionals are able to recognize behaviors that may lead to or signal the presence of an eating disorder,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “Through training primary care providers, the Center has helped thousands of patients get the care they need. Our bill allows this work to continue as we support the 192,000 Wisconsinites who are struggling with disordered eating.”

“Up to 29 million people in the U.S. will suffer from an eating disorder in their

lifetime, underscoring the importance of ensuring we have the resources in place to both diagnose and treat patients. As Minnesota Olympian Jessie Diggins has bravely said, we need people to know that help is available and they are not alone in this struggle,” **said Senator Klobuchar.** “In memory of Anna Westin, a Minnesotan who tragically died of an eating disorder at the young age of 21, I was proud to successfully lead bipartisan legislation to increase education and training on eating disorders through the creation of the Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders. Now, I’ve joined with a bipartisan group of my colleagues once again to support the Center and help countless families affected by eating disorders receive the care and services they need.”

“I am proud to join my colleagues to continue the work the Anna Westin Act began on eating disorders,” said Capito. “This legislation will have a profound impact on the millions of Americans experiencing eating disorders and will help ensure they will not be denied access to the same mental health services as those facing other types of illness. Now more than ever, we need to ensure medical providers in our communities are able to identify and refer individuals to appropriate treatment, and the Center is an important tool in achieving this goal.”

“As millions of Americans battle eating disorders, the Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders - based at UNC Chapel Hill - is at the forefront of training health care professionals,” **said Senator Tillis.** “This bipartisan legislation will enable the Center to build upon this important work, and I hope Congress will quickly pass this legislation and send it to the President’s desk to be signed into law.”

“The Anna Westin Legacy Act represents an important next step in being able to provide ongoing technical assistance on eating disorders to healthcare professionals. The Center has dedicated itself to developing and disseminating best practices to frontline healthcare clinicians, and we are eager to expand that work well into the future. This legislation will ensure that education and training on eating disorders is an integral component of the healthcare landscape and thereby increase our ability to detect and appropriately manage these life-threatening conditions,” **said Christine Peat, Director, Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders.**

Since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, pediatric emergency room admissions for eating disorders have doubled and adolescent eating disorder diagnoses have increased by 30 percent year over year. Eating disorders have the second highest mortality rates of any mental illness. Only one in three people affected by eating disorders will receive treatment, with persons of color half as likely to be diagnosed or to receive treatment for eating disorders.

The *Anna Westin Legacy Act* authorizes Center funding at \$5 million for each of FY 2023 – FY 2027 to:

- Adapt screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment (SBIRT) models for a pediatric population;
- Expand adaptive in-person and online training modules on eating disorders to reach more frontline professionals;
- Consult with the Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) on prevention, identification, and treatment of eating disorders for veterans and military servicemembers; and
- Facilitate integration of SBIRT for eating disorders within electronic health record systems.

Representative Doris Matsui (D-CA) is introducing companion legislation in the House.

This legislation is named in honor of Anna Westin of Chaska, Minnesota, who was diagnosed with anorexia at the age of 16. Despite the urgency of her condition, Anna had to wait until her insurance company ‘certified’ her treatment, ultimately delaying and limiting the treatment she received. After struggling with the disease for five years, Anna died at the age of 21.

The *Anna Westin Legacy Act* is supported by Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action; American Association for Marriage & Family Therapy; American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work; American Association on Health & Disability; American Foundation for Suicide Prevention; American Group Psychotherapy Association; American Psychological Association; Lakeshore Foundation; Anxiety & Depression Association of America; Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare; Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/

Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD); Clinical Social Work Association; Depression & Bipolar Support Alliance; Global Alliance for Behavioral Health & Social Justice; National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners; National Association of Social Workers; National League for Nursing; REDC Consortium; SMART Recover, National Council for Mental Wellbeing, and Mental Health America.

Baldwin, Klobuchar, and Capito have worked to reduce content online that may promote eating disorders. In October, they sent a [letter](#) to Facebook, which owns Instagram, expressing concern that content on Instagram encourages eating disorders among young users, specifically teenagers and girls. Klobuchar had previously pressed Facebook's Global Head of Safety Antigone Davis on this internal research at a [hearing](#) in September, where Davis admitted that the company knew about the findings but did not immediately take actions to protect teens.

An online version of this release is available [here](#).