

## **35<sup>th</sup> National Black Nurses Day on Capitol Hill Health Equity, Reckoning & Wellness: NBNA's Renewed Call to Action**

### **Suicide: A Mental Health Catastrophe**

The National Black Nurses Association (NBNA) supports comprehensive efforts to reduce suicide and its devastating effects on Black families. The rate of suicides has increased drastically among African Americans. The news of the recent suicides of high-profile African Americans is daunting. Those who experience the catastrophic aftermath of suicide are often left with mental health issues of their own. Suicide is a preventable public health problem. The NBNA calls on the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress to address suicide which impacts African Americans of all ages in the United States.

#### **Background**

- Although the overall rate of suicide in the U.S. decreased by 3% in 2020, the rate of suicide increased among Black men.
- The death rate from suicide for Black men increased to more than three times the rate of Black women between 2011 and 2020.
- Between 2011 and 2020 suicide rates increased for adolescents and young adults (ages 15 to 34).
- In 2022 the suicide rate among Black youth continued to increase faster than any other racial/ethnic group.
- Poverty level affects mental health status. Black adults living below the poverty line are more than twice as likely to report serious psychological distress than those with more financial security.
- A 2021 report revealed that female nurses are roughly twice as likely to die by suicide than the general female population and 70% more likely than female physicians
  - Nurses are 23% more likely to commit suicide than women in general
  - Nurses are 20-30% more likely to be depressed than the general population.
- There is a lack of diverse mental health providers (especially advance practice nurse providers)
  - In 2021, there were 6.6% Black psychiatric nurse practitioners (NPs) compared to 76.6% White (NPs)

#### **Recommendations to Legislators**

NBNA calls upon the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress to:

- Support legislation to provide education and funding for the new suicide prevention number 988.
- Support legislation that will increase the diversity of mental health nurse practitioners.
- Support funding for equitable access to mental health services (i.e., telehealth, community health) especially in underserved areas.
- Support legislation that invests in community-based programs that provide mental and behavioral health services such as **H.R.5407 – “Enhancing Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Through Campus Planning Act”**.

- Support legislation such as **H.R.9036** – “**Peer-to-Peer Suicide Prevention Act**”.
  - This bill directs the Department of Education to establish a program to award grants to eligible entities (e.g., local educational agencies) for facilitating peer-to-peer suicide prevention programs for middle and high school students.
- Support legislation such as **H.R.8680** – “**Greater Mental Health Access Act**”.
  - This bill establishes a special enrollment period for family members of individuals who died by suicide to enroll in, or change enrollment under, a health insurance plan.

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