



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION & LABOR
REPUBLICANS

**COMMITTEE
STATEMENT**

**Opening Statement of Rep. Rick Allen (R-GA), Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education**

Hearing:

**“The Importance of Trauma-Informed Practices in Education to Assist Students
Impacted by Gun Violence and Other Adversities”**

September 11, 2019

(As prepared for delivery)

“Sadly, far too many children are affected by trauma. Because of their age and reliance on adults to keep them safe, children are more vulnerable to trauma. Studies show that 26 percent of children in the United States will witness or experience a traumatic event before they turn four, and more than two thirds of children reported at least one traumatic event by age 16. Even more disturbing are the statistics surrounding children in the welfare system. Ninety-five percent of children reported psychological and physical abuse, and 99 percent reported psychological and sexual abuse. This is absolutely heartbreaking.

Trauma can include any variety of frightening events such as physical and sexual abuse, cyber bullying, or the death of a loved one. These can be caused by events at home, in the community, or around the world. Children that face more than two traumatic experiences in their life can develop reactions that negatively impact their daily life.

In fact, trauma can affect a child’s education and impair their learning. Research shows that there is a correlation between traumatic events and cognitive and behavioral issues. A study of more than 1000 children from 20 large cities in the United States found that traumatic events in early childhood were associated with below-average academic and literacy skills. In fact, I have been told in my district that if a child isn’t reading at level by third grade, he is more likely to drop out of high school and be incarcerated.

Educators and school staff can serve as a critical support system for traumatized children and their families. If a student is acting out, failing tests, or having difficulty concentrating it may be a sign of trauma. If teachers understand what a traumatized student is facing, they can better accommodate and address those child's needs in the classroom. However, teachers and the education system are no replacement for family and faith. Moms' and dads' and grandmas' and grandpas' cannot be replaced in the life of a child. Faith cannot be replaced in the life of a child. Education is just one piece of supporting and shaping children.

All of us in this room today want to see our nation's children are loved, happy, safe, and successful. There's not a person here who doesn't care deeply about their futures. Which is why we shouldn't turn any kind of trauma experienced by a child into a political platform. Instead we should focus on equipping families, schools, and communities with the tools they need to shape young Americans to be successful leaders. After all, we have a vested and sincere interest in the wellbeing of our nation's children – they are our future.

This hearing will examine the effects of trauma on school children, how to identify and address them, and most importantly, how we can help students have access to a safe, supportive, and healthy learning environment. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today.”

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