

12 January 2020

To whom it may concern,

Dear sir/madam,

I just became aware of the bill you're proposing to pass regarding screening of babies and children as young as a few months old.

Please reconsider your choices.

The Draft Report says early childhood education centres and schools act as the gateway for students and families to the mental health system. However, this usurps the role of schools: to be places of education, not clinics. Instead, already overworked teachers are being expected to be an adjunct to psychiatry, screening students for mental health problems and to refer them for a diagnosis. At the staggering annual cost of up to \$1.65 billion, a full time "wellbeing leader" is proposed for every school responsible for students' mental health and organising referral lines to mental health services in the community. This could increase the number of children being put on dangerous psychotropic drugs—some that can induce manic, aggressive and suicidal reaction.

Additionally, BY 2015, THERE WERE A STAGGERING 7,817 CHILDREN AGED 2-6 YEARS OLD ON A PSYCHIATRIC DRUG (4,974 on ADHD drugs, 1,459 on antidepressants and 1,349 on antipsychotics). The Department of Health no longer provides the numbers of children on psychiatric drugs by age, under 6. SCREENING OF 3 YEAR OLDS WAS SCRAPPED IN 2015: In 2012, a 3 year old's physical check called "Healthy Kids Check" was expanded to include screening for "mental illness" and was trialled at 8 Medicare Locals. Due to immense public criticism, this invasive screening was scrapped in 2015. Yet, now psychiatrists want to use the same guidelines as those used in the dumped Healthy Kids Check. When New Zealand introduced behavioural screening of 4 year olds, within four years, prescriptions of antidepressants to those aged 0-4 years old increased by 140%. IN 2017/18, THERE WERE 101,174 CHILDREN UNDER 17 ON ANTIDEPRESSANTS—A 34% INCREASE IN JUST 5 YEARS. In 2017, a further 107,000 children were on ADHD drugs. If the draft proposals are implemented, this could lead to even more children on ADHD drugs, antidepressants and antipsychotics. Many of these drugs can cause or are linked to suicidal behaviour and suicide.

I could go and on about how wrong this all is for our future.

But all I want to communicate is to please not approve this draft and do your own research based on FACTS beforehand.

Kind regards,

One concerned citizen and mother of four.