

Thank you Chair Tina Liebling and committee for this opportunity to speak. I am Shiori Tomatsu, a pediatric resident physician training at the University of Minnesota. Since last July, I have had the privilege of benefiting from a pilot program at the University of Minnesota, in the primary care pediatric setting, where a mental health professional serves as a teacher for residents and primary care providers in realtime. Section 6 will provide ongoing funding for this important work.

I would like to share a story of a 14 year old patient I took care of. He was seeing me for their annual checkup, but it quickly became clear that he was struggling with suicidal thoughts and depression stemming from childhood trauma. The patient had experienced gun violence, physical and sexual abuse from his father, neglect, and bullying at school.

We know that almost one-half of American children, or 34 million younger than 18 years, have faced at least 1 potentially traumatic early childhood experience. This patient came having experienced at least three forms of trauma, and was now struggling with depression. It is very common for mental health concerns to initially be brought up in primary care. I intuitively understood the negative effects of trauma on a child, but I myself did not have enough experience or knowledge to provide adequate care for this patient.

I was so grateful that day to have a psychologist teaching in the clinic to walk me through how to take care of patients with trauma. Because I had this resource, I felt comfortable making follow up appointments within a matter of weeks for this patient in the primary care clinic. Had I not had the psychologist's help in real time, I would have had to refer the patient to a specialty clinic with a wait list of several months and no management in the interim. With mental health care shortages, patients like this with very complex mental health needs often come to us first now. When we get training directly from specialists, we can take better care of them where they are.