



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Ford Fund, Congressional Award Foundation Partner to Offer Emotional Health Workshops for Teens

Friday, March 19, 2021 – The Congressional Award Foundation (CAF) teamed up with Ford Motor Company Fund (Ford Fund) to conduct free, interactive, virtual mental health workshops for young people in response to the impact on teens during the pandemic.

The series of workshops targeted students in Detroit, MI, Houston, TX, and Kansas City, MO, key communities under the foundation's **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion** outreach program. Each virtual workshop brought together mental health professionals, high school students and Members of Congress - **Congresswoman Debbie Dingell (MI-12), Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee (TX-18), and Congressman Emanuel Cleaver (MO-05)**, who provided words of encouragement and shared their own experiences with battling mental health challenges during the pandemic.

During last week's Kansas City workshop, **Congressman Cleaver** emphasized his long-standing commitment to ending the stigma around treating mental illness, stating, "Remember, it is okay to seek help, and you are not alone in this." The Congressman has sponsored various related bills such as **HR3192 – Improving Mental Health Access for Students Act, HR4327 – Enhancing Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Through Campus Planning Act, HR5469 – Pursuing Equity in Mental Health Act**, and more.

Pamela Alexander of the Ford Fund emphasized the importance of tending to one's mental health in this period of relative isolation, especially as a young person. "The COVID pandemic, and its impacts, has profoundly affected the mental health and well-being of many teens," said Alexander, Director, Community Development, Ford Motor Company Fund, "Ford Fund is proud to have partnered with the Congressional Award Foundation since early in the pandemic to address this critical issue."

Through the CAF's increased focus on virtual curriculum, the series of mental health-focused workshops has provided students with a network of support, concrete actions, and quality resources to combat the adverse effects on mental health. The CAF's National Director, **Erica Heyse**, stated she was "grateful for the generosity of the Ford Fund and the expertise of mental health professionals we've worked with to address the needs of our country's youth in these challenging times."

About

The Congressional Award is the United States Congress' only charity and the highest honor bestowed upon a youth civilian through the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. Established by Congress as a public-private partnership in 1979 under Public Law 96-114, the program recognizes initiative, service, and achievement in youth ages 13 ½ - 23. Learn more at www.congressionalaward.org.

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