Mental Health

~~Mental health is a disease like cancer that may have behavioral roots, but metastasizes to dangerous ends if not identified early and treated properly.   Like cancer and opioids, it was once talked about in hushed tones that has sublimated into public policy denial.~~

There is an epidemic of severe mental health issues among teens and young people in their 20s. Over the last 5 years the number of teenage girls that have committed suicide has doubled. Boys rates, always higher than girls, has increased by 30%. This is the #1 issue of concern for Somerville High School students.

> *We know that social media, plus the sad state of the environment and a whole host of issues are contributing to teen depression. In* [*a recent article in Tufts Magazine*](#)*, Nassir Ghaemi, a professor of psychiatry at Tufts School of Medicine, says that 22 percent of teens today show signs of depression and anxiety. That's double the rate of 20 years ago. He calls that statistic "staggering" and attributes most of it to our teens' "increased engagement with smartphones, digital technology and social media." He asserts that "the more depressed adolescents are, the more they use social media; the more they use social media, the more depressed they are. It's a vicious cycle."* - Boston Globe, May 9, 2019.

This epidemic it is caused partially by:
- Legitimate concern about a global future that will be shaped by climate disruption and pervasive automation.
- Exacerbated by a president who, here in Somerville, has expressed hate for our type of people (immigrants, liberals, women, scientists).
- Amped up by social media. - Tik tok may be more dangerous than Juul

Mental health must be treated like dental health. Everyone needs preventive care and most families will have members who will require some acute care.

Massachusetts has one of the highest levels of behavioral health specialists per capita, but only half of them take any form of health insurance. The result: a big gap between supply and demand

A coordinated state and local approach is needed to help treat students in need of medical health:
1. State – mandatory reporting, funding
2. Local – mixed delivery, municipal network