

Senate Bill 0228 Testimony

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Chairman VanderWall and Health Policy Committee Members:

I first want to thank you for having me here today, and I want to thank Senator Runestad for his leadership on this issue. My name is Corbin J. Standley, and I have the honor of serving on the Board of Directors for the Michigan Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP-MI). I am also a doctoral student at Michigan State University and my research focuses on suicide and suicide prevention. I am here today to urge you to support Senate Bill 228, which would establish a state suicide prevention commission.

I have worked with Senator Runestad's office to inform this bill, and I support it because I know that research, knowledge, and action can save lives. To design effective suicide prevention strategies, we must first have complete, accurate, and timely information about deaths by suicide. We need to know who is dying by suicide and the circumstances surrounding those deaths. This is even more vital when we look to increase effectiveness of prevention efforts by targeting high risk populations and settings. Research, data collection, and reporting are imperative to creating effective and sustainable suicide prevention services, resources, and programs.

The latest figures from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that 47,173 Americans died by suicide in 2017, with over 1,400 in Michigan.¹ The CDC also reports that there were an estimated 1,300,000 suicide attempts in that same year.¹ It is

estimated that for every completed suicide, there are 25 others who attempt². If we assume that for each of those 1,400 lives lost in Michigan, another 25 attempted, then over 35,000 Michigan residents survived a suicide attempt in 2017.

I wish more than anything I didn't know these statistics. I wish I didn't know so much about suicide prevention in general. I lost my brother, David, to suicide in June of 2010. He was just 21-years-old at the time. This profound loss is what brought me to this work. I came to this work because no other family should go through what mine has been through. Since that time, I have worked with numerous coalitions and organizations toward suicide prevention here in Michigan and across the country. Since that time, I have also learned that one of the best ways to prevent suicide is by understanding and responding to risk factors. We should be doing everything we can to understand suicide in our state so we can do everything we can to prevent it. This commission would help to initiate that research, disseminate the resultant knowledge, and help move us from talk to action.

Again, thank you Chairman VanderWall and members of the committee. I know that, with your help, we can truly save lives and bring hope to those affected by suicide.

¹ American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. CDC 2017 Suicide Statistics, [online] Available from URL: <https://afsp.org/about-suicide/suicide-statistics/>

² American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention, afsp.org

³ National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Numbers Count: Mental Disorders in America. [online]. Available from URL: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/the-numbers-count-mental-disorders-in-america/index.shtml>