

Dear Chairman Headland and the House Finance and Taxation Committee,

I understand that increasing tax on a service is not something we do without careful consideration. I know that each of you serving on the Finance and Taxation Committee avidly supports suicide prevention and that your considerations today will be made by weighing the cost burden we put on our constituents next to the benefit it may have.

So, what is the benefit we get and is it worth it?

I'm writing to you as a survivor of suicide. I could speak to you about my professional background within healthcare, suicide prevention advocacy or data outcomes, but I'd rather share a story with you about what suicide can mean, especially if you don't have a personal connection to it.

When I grew up, I felt like I was a burden to the people in my life. I felt like the world would be better off without me. I don't have memories of my younger years that weren't clouded in this depression and despair. I took each day by itself, never thinking I had a future. I knew college wasn't an option for me. I knew a home or a family was never on the table. I knew that I wasn't going to be here long, so I didn't try very hard to connect with people. And when I was younger I thought with certainty I would never live to my twenties.

Never once growing up did I hear about services to help me. I never heard about the suicide prevention hotlines. I didn't even really connect with the word suicide. The feelings of despair I had and how I wanted to act on them weren't things I could even put into words. They weren't things I ever talked to other people about. I already felt like a burden, so I didn't want to burden people with my suffering too.

I was lucky to survive my first attempt and it was only after that, that I started to actually get help. What motivates my work today as a suicide prevention advocate is a desire that no kid ever go through what I did. That they never feel so isolated, alone, and hopeless that they try to take their own life. Unfortunately, the data suggests quite a few kids are experiencing the exact same things I did growing up.

I've put in about four hundred hours of work this legislative session working on bills that can impact suicidality. I'm here right now, at the end of a sixteen hour day, trying to do everything I can for all the bills we are hearing this week. And this bill, right here, is the bill that gives me the most hope.

Suicide is incredibly complex and so are the systems to address and prevent it, but nothing more directly impacts suicidality for a cheaper cost than our hotlines that exist to catch people in a crisis. I ask you to take this under consideration when reviewing SB 2149. I ask if it is at all possible to put every effort into making the intentions of this bill a reality for our state. Our kids need it.

Thank you,
Faye Seidler