

Testimony in support of HB1456

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Our kids are in trouble. What are we doing as a state to help them? Shouldn't we try anything in our power to try to make their lives better...to try something?

Suicide deaths among 10–24-year-olds increased by 62% from 2007-2021. Suicide is rising dramatically in preteens as young as 8 years of age with an 8.2% annual increase from 2008-2022. Those statistics are shocking...and real.

According to data from the Children's Hospital Association Pediatric Health Information System, children's hospitals have seen a 166% increase in emergency room visits involving suicide attempts and self-injury among children 5-18. Our kids are in trouble!

Whenever I hear of another school shooting and a child who felt that aggression was the only way out of their grief, I always wonder...did that child have an opportunity to know about God and the love and mercy he shows to all who know Him? Many are blessed to have a family who cultivates that relationship and many don't.

HB 1456 would offer children in a school setting the opportunity, beyond school staff, to seek out friendship and a support system through a school chaplain. This wouldn't be a requirement but an open door for a student who may be struggling with issues they aren't comfortable sharing with anyone else. Another opportunity for an at-risk child to reach out for help and to find the connection they may be seeking and hopefully an improvement in their overall well-being. Could this support system prove effective? Could we see a decrease in self-harm, depression and suicide? Why wouldn't we try? Aren't our kids worth the effort?

When we as a society decided to take God out of our schools, our children suffered. Those facts can't be denied. It's time to do whatever we can to ensure our children have an additional line of support when they may need it.

Vote YES on HB 1456