

Chris O'Brien

From: Jen M <jenmatoney@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 22, 2021 7:41 PM
To: House Finance Committee
Subject: expressing my support for HB 5053 for Bridge Barriers in Rhode Island

Dear Legislature:

I was delighted to learn of H 5053 which I fully support. I lost my beloved mom, Lynn Matoney, to depression/suicide via a bridge in RI in 2007, and my life has never been the same since. I do not want any additional families to have to experience losing someone to suicide, which is painful and traumatic beyond words.

My mom was a resident of Kingston, a retired URI researcher in pharmacology and caretaker of four generations. She was only 58 years old. She suffered greatly from depression in her last few years of life, and unfortunately the mental health care system failed her. More needs to be done to prevent suicide – such as bridge barriers.

Many people do not understand that suicide is less about wanting to actually die than it is about trying desperately to escape from excruciating, unbearable pain – pain that is physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. A person in this state can be helped and/or has time to reconsider ending their life, when access to lethal means is limited, for example with bridge barriers.

I am suicide prevention trainer and board member of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP). A key way to prevent suicide is to limit access to lethal means such as the use of bridge barriers. Research has shown that installing barriers on bridges deters suicides and in many cases, bridge barriers actually lowered the suicide rate for the entire region. Rhode Island with its many bridges needs this.

Suicide is a public health threat. It has a ripple effect where those who lose someone to suicide and those exposed to the death (i.e. first responders) become at higher risk for suicide than those who have not suffered a loss or been exposed.

It is truly a dream of mine to see bridge barriers erected in RI. Thank you for consideration of my input.

Best regards,
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