



February 24, 2021

The Honorable Representative Marvin L. Abney  
Chair of the House Finance Committee  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

**Re: House Bill 5053, Relating to Suicide Prevention Nets on Bridges**

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to express the Mental Health Association of Rhode Island's support for House Bill 5053, relating to suicide prevention nets around bridges.

Mental illness affects one in five American adults. Serious mental illness affects one in 25 adults in the U.S., and one-half of all cases of chronic mental illness begin by age 14.<sup>1</sup> According to the Rhode Island Department of Health, suicide is the second leading cause of death for Rhode Islanders ages 15 to 34.<sup>2</sup> Adults (ages 44-54) had the highest rate of suicide from 2010-2016 nationally and in Rhode Island.<sup>3</sup>

As someone who has struggled with episodes of severe depression, it is difficult to convey the utter agony and havoc that mental illness can wreak on one's life. For many of us, there are moments of desperation, and our pain feels endless and beyond our control. Sometimes it is difficult to hang onto hope. Safety nets around bridges will prevent a person in pain from acting on their momentary desperation. Nets save lives.

We respectfully urge you to support this legislation, and to give people living with mental illness a second chance at life.

Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nami.org/nami/media/nami-media/infographics/generalmhfacts.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://health.ri.gov/data/suicideandselfharminjury/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://health.ri.gov/data/suicideandselfharminjury/>



Mental Health Association of Rhode Island  
*An Affiliate of Mental Health America*

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Respectfully,

*Laurie-Marie Pisciotta*

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Executive Director

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