



Crisis Hotline: 401-272-4044 Toll Free: 800-365-4044 Business Line: 401-721-5220 Fax: 401-753-7938 www.samaritansri.org

44th Year of Service
to Rhode Island
1977- 2021

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF H-5053

Board of Directors

To: The Honorable House Committee on Finance
From: Denise Panichas, Executive Director

2/24/21

Meredith Hampton
President

On behalf of the board of directors of The Samaritans of Rhode Island, I am pleased to submit this letter in support of Rep. Solomon's legislation H-5053.

Joseph Tavares
Chief, East Prov. Police
Dept., Retired
Vice President

At the outset, we acknowledge the memories of those who have tragically been lost to suicide including from the Jamestown, Pell and Mt Hope bridges. Every bridge suicide represents an unforgiving loss that forever stays with the family, friends, co-workers, medical personnel, police, fire, harbor master and military first responders, the ME's office, the staff of RIE-911, the RI Bridge and Turnpike Authority, the communities where those we lost resided and so many more.

Marilyn Dorsey
Treasurer
Irene Ogarek
Secretary

Rui P. Alves, Esq

On our Crisis Hotline/Listening Line, we befriend the hopeless, alone and the suicidal contemplating jumps from the bridges. At our grief support group, Safe Place, established in 1981, we befriend those grieving bridge losses. We know people lost to the bridges and we know survivors of bridge jumps. We know the people who have witnessed bridge jumps. We know the people who have hung on to potential bridge jumpers while waiting for help to arrive. We know the people who find the bodies that have washed ashore sometimes here in Rhode Island and others in far-away places. We know the people who watch as the bodies arrive at the dock after being recovered. After this hearing, when your day is done and everyone goes home, Samaritan volunteers continue to part of the community of people who live with the aftermath of not having barriers on the bridges to prevent suicides.

Elsa A. Campos

Everett Dana Carvalho
Officer, Providence Police Dept.

Teresa Chopoorian, EdD, MSN

Nicole Coggins, RN

Bryan Ganley

Alfred L. Grant

John M. LaCross
Chief, Barrington Police Dept.

Ann McCarthy

Kenneth W. Walsh

The upcoming federal COVID-19 economic development stimulus funding for roads and bridges is an opportunity to finally bring this nightmare to an end. Suicide prevention barriers should be part of every RIDOT/RITBA work plan. And it should be noted, highway and bridge funding cannot be diverted to mental health treatment.

William A. Catelli Jr.
Board President Emeritus

While we are often cited as a state that is last in many things – it does not have to be that way for bridge barriers. We are a state with the design and engineering talent to be the first in the nation to give birth to innovative solutions that can solve the problem and be cost effective. But there must be a sense of urgency that matches the timetable proposed in the legislation because one more suicide is one suicide too many.

Forever Home Campaign
Volunteer Advisor
Dennis E. Stark

Forever Home Campaign
Volunteer Architect
Dana M. Newbrook

So today, as you contemplate this legislation, know that you will have a chance to change the destiny of not only the hopeless and alone but everyone who lives in their world.

Forever Home Campaign
Volunteer Project Management
Michael D. Cassidy

Enclosure: Brochure: The Samaritans of RI - A Suicide Emergency Checklist for Shoreline and Island Communities.

Denise Panichas, Ex. Director