

Dear Representatives of the House Finance Committee,

I am writing to urge you to support H8148, the bill directing the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority to design and implement suicide prevention barriers and/or safety netting on major Rhode Island bridges, including the Claiborne Pell Bridge, Mount Hope Bridge, Sakonnet River Bridge, and Jamestown Verrazzano Bridge.

This legislation is a compassionate and evidence-based public safety measure that will save lives.

Research consistently shows that suicidal crises are often brief and impulsive. Approximately 24% of individuals who survive a suicide attempt report acting within less than five minutes of deciding to attempt, and roughly 70% contemplate suicide for less than one hour before acting. Barriers create time — time for the impulse to pass, time for intervention, and time for someone to receive help.

Bridge barriers have demonstrated roughly 90% effectiveness worldwide in reducing suicides at known locations, without leading to equivalent increases elsewhere. Just as importantly, studies show that about 90% of people who survive a suicide attempt do not later die by suicide. Prevention works, and a single interruption can change — and save — a life.

H8148 recognizes that our public infrastructure should protect Rhode Islanders in moments of crisis. This bill offers a practical, humane, and proactive approach grounded in public health evidence and suicide prevention best practices.

I respectfully ask that you support H8148 and help move this legislation forward in committee and on the House floor.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Sherwood

Family member of Matthew Lowry who died by suicide from the Mount Hope Bridge.