

Kimberly Hodgkins Lees  
540 Angell Road, Lincoln, RI 02865  
Email: [kjlees@verizon.net](mailto:kjlees@verizon.net)

---

May 12, 2026

***Sent via email to HouseFinance@rilegislature.gov***

Honorable Chairman Marvin L. Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

**Re: H 8148 — Bridge Safety Barriers and Netting**

Dear Chairman Abney and members of the House Finance Committee:

Thank you, Chairman Abney and members of the House Finance Committee. My name is Kim Lees. I'm a lifelong Rhode Islander from Lincoln, an advocate and volunteer with the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, and a suicide loss survivor. I'm here to urge you to pass **H 8148** out of committee to advance proven, lifesaving safety measures—bridge barriers and netting—that prevent suicides and protect Rhode Islanders.

On the morning of February 26, 2021, the phone rang and I will never forget the words I heard - that my brother Kyle died by suicide. We were extremely close born 11 months apart in the same year and living just minutes from each other at the time of his death. We were true Irish Twins and apparently, I used to walk around telling everybody that. We were so close that we shared the same group of friends throughout our childhood. This call, his suicide, came out of nowhere. It blindsided and shattered our family, and we're still living with the impact every single day.

One of the most effective ways to prevent suicide is to create time for an intense, often brief crisis to pass, and time for someone to intervene. Physical safety barriers and netting on bridges do exactly that. They delay access, deter impulsive attempts, and provide a crucial window for a bystander, first responder, or loved one to step in.

The evidence is strong. A recent peer-reviewed study of the Golden Gate Bridge found that after suicide-deterrent nets were installed, suicides at the site fell by **about 73%** compared to the period before installation. The same study found **more third-party interventions**—because barriers and netting create the time and opportunity for someone to step in before a tragedy occurs. National suicide prevention experts, including AFSP, recognize bridge barriers as the **most effective** way to prevent suicides at high-risk structures because they add that critical time.

Bridges are public places—accessible day and night. When a person reaches a point of crisis at a height location, the margin for error is razor thin. Barriers and netting are a practical, proven way to protect people in that moment, reduce traumatic incidents for witnesses, and lessen the long-term toll on first responders who must repeatedly respond to these emergencies.

H 8148 is important because it moves Rhode Island toward installing evidence-based safety barriers and netting on bridges where the risk is highest. These structural improvements are not symbolic—they are engineering solutions that prevent access, slow the impulse, and create the time needed for intervention. That time is what saves lives and time can help spare other families the lifelong devastation of suicide.

Someone I loved died by suicide. He was not weak, he was not selfish, and he was not a coward. Although he hid it well, he was in great pain and lost sight of hope. Suicide is a leading cause of death in the United States, and every loss leaves families like mine with grief and questions that never fully go away.

I'm here to honor Kyle and on behalf of others who no longer have a voice by asking you to take action today and help bring hope to Rhode Islanders.

So I'm respectfully urging you: **please pass H 8148 out of the House Finance Committee.** Safety barriers and netting save lives because they create time—time for the crisis to pass and time for intervention. Moving this bill forward is a concrete, evidence-based step Rhode Island can take right now to prevent deaths and protect families.

As Dr. Seuss wrote, "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

I thank you for your time.



Kim Lees  
Lincoln, RI

AFSP – RI Chapter  
Advocacy Committee Member  
Northern RI Walk Committee  
Team Captain of *Kyle's Storm Troopers*, Northern RI Out of the Darkness Walk since 2021

