

Dear Members of the Committee,

Thank you for hearing testimony on H8148.

My sister and I were among the only surviving family members who spoke publicly at the hearing, alongside the Good Samaritans who witnessed these tragedies firsthand. In addition, 33 written testimonies were submitted by professionals, family members, friends, and community advocates supporting this bill.

On July 27, 2023, my cousin Matthew died after jumping from the Mount Hope Bridge during a mental health crisis.

Two years earlier, he survived a previous suicide attempt because someone intervened in time.

That is why barriers matter.

Suicidal crises are often *impulsive* and *temporary*. Barriers create a pause — time for intervention, time for the impulse to pass, and time for survival.

At the hearing, we shared not only our grief but the devastating ripple effects these deaths have on families, witnesses, first responders, recovery teams, and entire communities.

“Held for further study” cannot be where this conversation ends.

This bill represents an opportunity to prevent future deaths and spare other Rhode Island families from unimaginable trauma. We are asking you to continue this conversation, advance H8148, and treat this issue with the urgency it deserves.

It may be too late for our family, but it is not too late for another. These deaths are avoidable, yet they continue to happen year after year.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Michelle Sherman

North Kingstown, RI