

Representative Marvin Abney  
Chairman House Finance Committee  
Rhode Island State House 82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

May 14, 2026

Dear Representative Abney and Finance Committee Members:

Thank you for taking the time to consider my written personal and professional testimony today, in support of **House Bill 8177: Relating to Public Utilities and Carriers- 988 Call Center Funding and Operations Act.**

My name is Michaela Cook, I currently reside in Cranston, RI. I write to you today as a volunteer field advocate for the RI Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. I am also a long-term survivor of suicide loss; a mental health consumer, a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker for individuals and families across the state; an active member/player and coach of the RI/MASS hockey community, amongst many other avenues that life intersects with regularly. My journey of loss and healing began on October 31, 2003, when I lost my best friend and college sweetheart, Jonathan Bagley to a death by suicide. Since that day, my life's work has been invested in my own recovery from PTSD; helping others heal through their own symptoms and loss of loved ones to suicide; and everyday impacts mental wellness and resources have on how we manage all of what is to come as well.

The sudden impact of recent tragic events in RI (at both Brown University and Lynch Arena) do not fully encompass the traumas that we, as Rhode Islanders, are currently processing and that will continue to need much support as we heal through the new year ahead. This testimony can only touch upon a few of the impacts all the above has had on my own healing journey and the ripple effects of the lives of so many others. The crisis in Rhode Island has only grown more urgent since Jonathan's death in 2003 and will continue to do so with the most recent incidents we face today. So many tragedies and issues of concern in our RI community have been prevented with calls answered by the 988 Crisis Line and more support is needed as we continue to navigate the world around us as well. So many lives have been saved since 988's launch and we can continue to prevent suicide together with secured funding/availability for anyone in need of support.

By fully funding **H 8177** you are helping save lives, divert emergency resources to other places of intense need and restore hope when there is no one else to turn to during a time of need. Our community needs this now more than ever.

Respectfully,

Michaela Cook, LICSW

Field Advocate

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, RI Chapter

In memory of Jonathan E. Bagley 11/21/78-10/31/2003

