

Senator Louis P. DiPalma  
Senate Finance Committee Chair  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street Providence, RI 02903

April 14, 2026

Dear Senator DiPalma and fellow members of the Senate Finance Committee:

Thank you for taking the time to consider my written personal and professional testimony today, in support of **S3058 Article 10 Funding for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**. My name is Michaela Cook, I currently reside in Cranston, RI. I am a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker for individuals and families from across the state (since MSW in 2013). I am also a volunteer field advocate for the RI Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (since 2016) and a long-term survivor of suicide loss who has utilized the services available within the department of behavioral healthcare, developmental disabilities, and hospitals as a consumer (since 2003).

I am writing today as I am unable to attend in person, due to my fully booked schedule and professional obligations as a clinical supervisor and outpatient therapist with an active caseload of 106 clients; including children (as young as 6) through adults attending in-person sessions, regularly to support their mental health and wellness. My professional obligations and range of clinical support required of me, consistently, during the hours of 08:00AM and 7:00PM Monday through Friday are also congruent with the level of support and attention needed at this time.

My own 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 (Essex Junction, Vermont). Since that day, my life's work has been invested in my own recovery from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, grief and advocacy efforts in my own life, while also helping others heal through their own symptoms and loss of loved ones to suicide. Most recently we have all been processing the impacts our small state has recently endured at Brown University in December and the Lynch Arena in Pawtucket. The mental health crisis in Rhode Island has only grown more urgently and will continue to do so as we begin to restore hope to our friends, family members, and community in our small state every day.

Here in RI, the BH-Link has the fastest call response time in the country. The increase in calls, reaching nearly 1,000 calls answered per month, in RI, is evidence that it is needed and utilized often. I have witnessed this truth many times when offering the crisis line as support to others as well as hearing the calls be answered throughout my personal and professional relationships.

Thank you again to our RI Senate Leadership for also prioritizing **funding for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** in support of mental health, wellness and recovery for all of Rhode Island. 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.

Best Regards,

Michaela Cook, LICSW

Volunteer Field Advocate

AFSP Rhode Island



Jonathan Eric Bagley 11/21/1978-10/31/2003