

July 21, 2023

The Honorable Donald Beyer
1119 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Brian Fitzpatrick
271 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Beyer and Representative Fitzpatrick:

The undersigned members of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG) write in strong support of H.R. 3759, the *Barriers to Suicide Act of 2023*. We applaud your commitment to stopping suicide, and we are proud to endorse your legislation to aid states and localities in providing life-saving nets and barriers on bridges.

Suicide is a leading cause of death in the United States, with over 48,000 individuals dying by suicide in 2021.¹ This represents a nearly 5% increase in the overall suicide rate from 2020 to 2021. While this is a troubling trend, suicide can be prevented through effective intervention and prevention methods. For bridges and other publicly accessible areas of significant height, installing barriers can act as a delay or deterrent to an individual at risk, providing more time to get through the intense, often brief, moment of crisis.

The moments leading up to a suicide attempt are the most critical and are ripe for intervention and prevention. Removing or limiting access to lethal means in the moments before a suicide attempt can deter the crisis and provide valuable time for the individual to receive support and bypass acting on a suicidal impulse. According to the Lifeline Steering Committee, established by the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (now the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline), the most effective way to prevent suicide-by-jumping from bridges is by implementing bridge barriers.²

The *Barriers to Suicide Act* would help communities across the country install barriers and nets on bridges, diverting the moment of crisis so that individuals who are at risk for suicide-by-jumping can receive the care and support they need. The competitive grant program established by this legislation will help to address the ongoing suicide crisis in this country by allowing states and localities to apply for federal funding to support the installation of evidence-based suicide deterrents on bridges.

Importantly, the bill also establishes a study by the Government Accountability Office to explore other deterrents that are effective on these structures, as well as which structures besides bridges tend to attract high number of deaths-by-suicide. This study will help inform the most effective means of preventing suicides on bridges and other high structures, helping to save lives and giving us more options for future methods of reducing access to these lethal means during a moment of suicidal crisis.

Thank you again for your leadership on this important legislation. We look forward to working with you and your staff to enact this bill this Congress.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/suicide-data-statistics.html>

² <https://www.campusuicidepreventionva.org/Suicide-Prevention-Bridges-National-Suicide-Prevention-Lifeline-Position-2017.pdf>

Sincerely,

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association for Psychoanalysis In Clinical Social Work
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Counseling Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association Services
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare (AABH)
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Centerstone
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Childrens Hospital Association
Clinical Social Work Association
Crisis Text Line
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance
Mental Health America
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD)
National Council for Mental Wellbeing
National Federation of Families
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
No Health without Mental Health
Postpartum Support International
Psychotherapy Action Network
Residential Eating Disorders Consortium
Sandy Hook Promise
SMART Recovery
The Jed Foundation
The Kennedy Forum
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
The Trevor Project
Treatment Communities of America
Trust for America's Health
Vibrant Emotional Health