

6276

Hello. My name is Kaitlin Plude and I am a senior at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven, Ct. I will graduate in May 2015 with my Bachelors in Social Work. I also have been interning at the Department of Children and Families in Norwalk, CT for the past seven months. I currently work in the intake/investigation unit at DCF. Social workers and interns at DCF are mandated to attend trainings every year or so in classes such as: car seat training and mandated reporting. I am writing this testimony in support of the proposed bill HB-6276. This proposed bill proposes that professionals in the health care system attend a one time, three to six hour training in youth suicide prevention every six years. This bill will positively affect me as a future professional in the health care system because the health care system does include clinical social workers as well as master social workers. I would greatly appreciate it if the Public Health Committee takes the time to read this testimony and greatly considers voting HB-6276 out of committee.

This policy proposal is the best proposal because youth suicide is a social issue that must be acknowledged in Connecticut as well as nationwide. Although suicide is rare among children, in adolescents suicides and suicide attempts become increasingly more common. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, suicide is the third leading cause of death for ages 15-24 years old. In fact, adolescents and young adults die from suicide more than HIV/AIDS, cancer, heart disease, birth defects, stroke, chronic lung disease, influenza, and pneumonia combined. Results from a Connecticut School Health Survey in 2009 reports that 14.1% of high school students have highly considered suicide and 7.4% have actually attempted suicide. It is also believed that 25 suicide attempts are attempted for every successful youth suicide. This policy proposal will properly train and educate health care professionals to work with youths who are at serious risk to suicide. With adequate training in this public health matter, we may greatly see a reduction in youths considering suicide and a reduction in youths attempting suicide.

Recently the media has been covering stories regarding youths who have turned to suicide as their only option for escape as well as acceptance. For instance, take Josh Alcorn's story. Josh was a young transgender teen from Ohio who took his own life in early January 2015 because his parents would not accept Josh for identifying himself as a girl. Josh felt alone, depressed, abandoned, and hopeless. Sadly Josh believed his parents would never come around and accept him as a transgender girl so Josh believed taking his own life was the only way to be free. Josh also believed suicide was the only way to demonstrate to his parents as well as the world how lonely and depressed he was. Josh's suicide, as well as many other youth suicides this year, may have been prevented with the counseling and support from a health care provider trained in youth suicide prevention.

As a social work student and as an intern at DCF, I understand how important it is to educate ourselves on subjects such as: suicide, mental illness, depression, and substance abuse. Annual training will only be a positive experience because there is always more to learn, especially in the health care system. With proper training and education in youth suicide prevention, I believe Connecticut will see a great reduction in youth suicides. Only with adequate training and education can we help those who are suffering from suicidal thoughts and suffocating emotions. Only with the adequate training and education can we successfully save lives. Therefore, I am asking that the Public Health Committee votes bill HB-6276 favorably out of committee.