



**March 4, 2015**

**Public Health Committee  
Room 3000, Legislative Office Building  
Hartford, CT 06106**

**Attn: Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee**

***CONCERNING***

**Testimony in support of Proposed bill 6276 in which the legislation increase training for health care professional in youth suicide prevention.**

My name is Thomas J Steen and I am the Executive Director for the Capital Area Substance Abuse Council (CASAC) which serves communities the in the Hartford region. I want to offer testimony concerning this bill "seeking to increase suicide prevention training for various social service professionals by mandating they attend a three to six hour training every six years in suicide prevention and that physician, physician assistant, chiropractor, naturopath, licensed practical nurse, registered nurse, advanced practice registered nurse, physical therapist and physical therapist assistant to complete a onetime, three to six hour training course in youth suicide prevention."

My support of this bill is very personal. My son, Tyler, died by suicide. His death in December, 2009 was a highly personal, emotional family event. I'll never forget the overwhelming sorrow and emptiness I felt when Tyler passed. As time went by, I began to recover and decided to honor my son's memory by helping others who are at risk. I have found that the best way to prevent suicide is by communication and education.

To this end, I have become a suicide prevention "Gatekeeper" trainer. Over the past several years, I have trained more than 3000 individuals using evidence based suicide prevention curriculum called QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer,). This training teaches us that most suicidal individuals give warning signs or signals of their struggles.

I've witnessed firsthand the impact on individuals who receive this training. Many participants, including health professionals, have reported that this type of training helps to reduce the stigma of suicide and save lives." It works!"

In addition, I would urge you to strengthen the proposed legislation to require primary care providers to take the course at least once every 3 years. Also, I would recommend that the bill require the use of evidence base suicide prevention training like QPR or as outline in the national registry: Suicide Prevention Resource Center or SPRC.

In Connecticut, one person, on average, dies each day by suicide. The true tragedy is suicide is one of the most preventable causes of death. Making suicide prevention training a requirement for health professional is an excellent first step to reducing suicide in our state.

Respectfully submitted,

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