

6276

Ashley McDowell  
107 Lakeview Avenue West Haven  
ashleyelizabeth3443@gmail.com

Chairwoman Gerratana, Chairman Ritter, and Committee Members:

I want to thank you for the opportunity to voice my support of HB 6276 in this written testimony.

I am a 25 year old college graduate, a future graduate school student, an American Foundation for Suicide Prevention volunteer field advocate, and a survivor of suicide loss.

In May of 2002, I lost my half-brother to suicide. I was 12, confused, and knew I lost a brother who I wish I had more time with. In May 2004, I received a call on a Sunday night that I will never forget. It was a friend that informed me that a friend of ours took her own life earlier that day. I lost another loved one in my life to suicide.

It wasn't until sometime in 2006 that I realized I had a voice for suicide loss. In my sophomore year of high school, my English class was assigned to write individual essays on a personal anecdote of our choice. For the first time, everything I was feeling about the loss of my loved ones left my mind and became a powerful voice on a piece of lined paper. It was the beginning of healing for me. Our words and stories have power and a purpose. If my story can help someone fight for their life or bring more awareness to the issue, then I will tell it. I just want to do all that I possibly can to ensure no more families experience the indescribable and gripping pain that suicide loss brings to each person affected by it.

In August 2014, I became a volunteer field advocate for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. As my undergraduate studies were in legal studies and political science, I enjoy reaching out and building relationships with local, state, and federal elected officials for suicide prevention. In order for counselors, psychologists, social workers, and physicians to help prevent suicide, it is crucial that health professionals be trained and equipped with the tools needed to understand suicidal behavior and help their patients – not just young people, but patients of all ages. I am going back to school to study and get my Master's in forensic psychology and hope to one day obtain my Ph.D. in clinical psychology for the same reason. I want to be educated to help others in need. Please support HB 6276.

Thank you.