



**American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention**

January 25, 2021

The Honorable Donald Beyer
1119 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Katko
2457 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Grace Napolitano
1610 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Beyer, Katko, and Napolitano:

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), the nation's leading non-profit dedicated to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide, is writing to express support for the *Barriers to Suicide Act*. This vital piece of legislation will create grants for state and local governments to fund nets and barriers on bridges to prevent deaths by suicide.

Suicide is a national public health crisis, affecting millions of Americans each year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported in June 2018 that life expectancy has decreased in the United States as the suicide rate has increased 30 percent over the past 20 years¹. In 2019, 47,511 Americans died by suicide making it the 10th leading cause of death in the country and the 2nd leading cause of death for ages 10-34².

Bridge barriers save lives by giving suicidal individuals and those who care for them something they desperately need – time. This includes time for the intense suicidal risk to diminish and time for someone to intervene with mental health support and resources. Research consistently shows that the majority of those averted from a suicide attempt at a bridge do not go on to complete suicide elsewhere or with another method, and overall suicide deaths often decline throughout the surrounding area after bridge barriers are in place³.

The establishment of a competitive grant program for states and localities to apply for federal funding to install nets and barriers on bridges at high risk locations is an important step in our nation's overall suicide prevention efforts. Moreover, AFSP applauds the legislation's inclusion of language calling on the U.S. Comptroller General to study the effectiveness of nets and barriers for structures other than bridges in preventing suicide.

AFSP thanks you for your leadership on this important piece of legislation. AFSP has [local chapters](#) in all 50 states with programs and events nationwide; please feel free to reach out if you'd like to be connected locally or if AFSP can provide additional supportive resources or materials.

Sincerely,

Robert Gebbia
Chief Executive Officer

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/suicide/index.html>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html>

³ <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/saves-lives/>