

February 1, 2021

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

The 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 Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG)- a coalition of national organizations representing consumers, family members, mental health and addiction providers, advocates, and other stakeholders- is writing to express our strong 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 years<sup>1</sup>. In 2019, 47,511 Americans died by suicide making it the 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the country and the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death for ages 10-34<sup>2</sup>.

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 place<sup>3</sup>.

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, the MHLG 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.

The MHLG thanks you for your leadership and efforts to introduce this critical legislation that will help to prevent deaths by suicide.

Sincerely,  
American Art Therapy Association  
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry  
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy  
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work

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

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

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

American Association of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Counseling Association  
American Dance Therapy Association  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
American Group Psychotherapy Association  
American Mental Health Counselors Association  
American Occupational Therapy Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychoanalytic Association  
American Psychological Association  
Anxiety and Depression Association of America  
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare  
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW)  
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law  
Centerstone  
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder  
Clinical Social Work Association  
College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists (CPNP)  
Crisis Text Line  
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance  
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy and Action  
EMDR International Association  
Emergency Nurses Association  
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice  
International OCD Foundation  
The Jed Foundation  
The Jewish Federations of North America  
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance  
Mental Health America (MHA)  
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals  
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)  
National Association for Rural Mental Health (NARMH)  
National Association of County Behavioral Health & Developmental Disability Directors (NACBHDD)  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors  
National Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders  
National Council for Behavioral Health  
National Federation of Families  
National Register of Health Service Psychologists  
No Health without Mental Health  
Postpartum Support International  
RI International, Inc.  
Sandy Hook Promise  
School Social Work Association of America  
Society of Psychiatric Mental Health Nurses  
The Education Development Center  
The Kennedy Forum  
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health

The Trevor Project  
Trust for America's Health  
Well Being Trust