

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 14, 2018

The Honorable Rodney P. Frelinghuysen
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Lowey:

As you continue FY 2019 Appropriations deliberations, we write to request increased funding for suicide prevention programs.

The recent celebrity deaths of designer Kate Spade and then chef and restaurateur Anthony Bourdain have brought suicide into the national limelight once again. Unfortunately, these deaths are a tiny fraction of the tens of thousands of individuals we will lose to suicide this year. Suicides do not occur in a vacuum and one incident can influence others to take their lives, a phenomenon known as contagion or clustering. The deaths of well-known celebrities also contribute to this effect. For example, after the death of Ms. Spade, calls to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline increased by 25 percent.

Of even greater concern is new CDC data showing that suicide rates surged in nearly every state over a 17-year period ending in 2016. A quarter of states saw a 30 percent spike in suicide deaths. Suicide is now one of three leading causes of death in the U.S. that are on the rise, joining Alzheimer's disease and drug overdose. Congress has taken steps to more effectively address Alzheimer's disease and drug overdoses caused by opioids, but we can do more when it comes to suicide prevention.

This data shows that it is imperative that Congress commit to \$150 million for suicide prevention research within the National Institutes of Mental Health. In addition to recognizing the urgent need for greater research, we are also concerned that funding has remained flat or decreased for many suicide prevention programs in recent years. At the DOD, \$25.628 million was allocated for the defense suicide prevention office in FY16, compared to \$8.324 million for FY17 and an estimated \$9.401 million for FY18. At the CDC, \$48.950 million was allocated for injury prevention activities in FY15, and only \$28.950 in FY18. Under SAMHSA, funding has remained flat since FY14 for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, the American Indian/Alaskan Native Suicide Prevention Initiative, and the Garrett Lee Smith Youth Suicide Prevention Program.

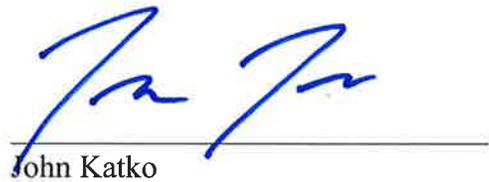
The spike in calls to the Lifeline following the recent celebrity deaths and the new CDC data reinforce the urgency and magnitude of this epidemic. Congress cannot afford to continue to undercut investments in critical programs that help prevent suicide. We need to be doing more to combat suicide, not less.

We urge you to increase funding for the programs that work to prevent suicide.

Sincerely,



Donald S. Beyer Jr.



John Katko