

Barriers to Suicide Act

Representatives Donald S. Beyer Jr., Brian Fitzpatrick, and Grace Napolitano

In honor of May Mental Health Awareness Month, Representatives Donald S. Beyer Jr., Brian Fitzpatrick, and Grace Napolitano are introducing the Barriers to Suicide Act in an effort to begin stemming the rising rate of deaths by suicide across the country.

In 2018, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released a report indicating that suicide rates have risen by about 33 percent since 1999. More than 48,000 lives were lost to suicide in 2021 alone. Further, between 2009 and 2020, we lost 11,154 Americans to suicide-by-jumping.

Data shows that there are several useful mechanisms to deter people from hurting themselves in moments of crisis. Restricting access to lethal means allows time for a person to move out of crisis mode and seek help. Several studies demonstrate potential for saving lives by installing physical barriers and nets on bridges that are commonly used for suicide-by-jumping. However, states and localities have a difficult time funding barriers and nets on bridges.

The Barriers to Suicide Act addresses this issue. It would:

- Establish a competitive grant program for states and localities to apply for federal funding to install nets and barriers on bridges
- Make these types of projects eligible under the National Highway Performance Program
- Authorize a federal study to identify
 - Structures other than bridges that attract high number of deaths-by-suicide
 - Characteristics that distinguish these structures from those that do not attract high number of deaths-by-suicide
 - Types of nets and barriers that are effective on these structures
 - Methods other than nets and barriers that reduce suicide-by-jumping deaths at these structures