

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 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 of 2019 (H.R. 4309). 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 2017, over 47,000 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 to change their minds, time for someone to intervene, and time to seek help. 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, 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
American Association of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry

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/>

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 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)
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy and Action
Emergency Nurses Association
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
International OCD Foundation
The Jewish Federations of North America
Mental Health America (MHA)
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 Council for Behavioral Health
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
No Health without Mental Health
Postpartum Support International
Sandy Hook Promise
School Social Work Association of America
The Kennedy Forum
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
The Trevor Project
Trust for America's Health