

July 21, 2023

The Honorable Donald Beyer  
1119 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Brian Fitzpatrick  
271 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Beyer and Representative Fitzpatrick:

The undersigned members of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG) write in strong support of H.R. 3759, the *Barriers to Suicide Act of 2023*. We applaud your commitment to stopping suicide, and we are proud to endorse your legislation to aid states and localities in providing life-saving nets and barriers on bridges.

Suicide is a leading cause of death in the United States, with over 48,000 individuals dying by suicide in 2021.<sup>1</sup> This represents a nearly 5% increase in the overall suicide rate from 2020 to 2021. While this is a troubling trend, suicide can be prevented through effective intervention and prevention methods. For bridges and other publicly accessible areas of significant height, installing barriers can act as a delay or deterrent to an individual at risk, providing more time to get through the intense, often brief, moment of crisis.

The moments leading up to a suicide attempt are the most critical and are ripe for intervention and prevention. Removing or limiting access to lethal means in the moments before a suicide attempt can deter the crisis and provide valuable time for the individual to receive support and bypass acting on a suicidal impulse. According to the Lifeline Steering Committee, established by the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (now the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline), the most effective way to prevent suicide-by-jumping from bridges is by implementing bridge barriers.<sup>2</sup>

The *Barriers to Suicide Act* would help communities across the country install barriers and nets on bridges, diverting the moment of crisis so that individuals who are at risk for suicide-by-jumping can receive the care and support they need. The competitive grant program established by this legislation will help to address the ongoing suicide crisis in this country by allowing states and localities to apply for federal funding to support the installation of evidence-based suicide deterrents on bridges.

Importantly, the bill also establishes a study by the Government Accountability Office to explore other deterrents that are effective on these structures, as well as which structures besides bridges tend to attract high number of deaths-by-suicide. This study will help inform the most effective means of preventing suicides on bridges and other high structures, helping to save lives and giving us more options for future methods of reducing access to these lethal means during a moment of suicidal crisis.

Thank you again for your leadership on this important legislation. We look forward to working with you and your staff to enact this bill this Congress.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/suicide-data-statistics.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.campusuicidepreventionva.org/Suicide-Prevention-Bridges-National-Suicide-Prevention-Lifeline-Position-2017.pdf>

Sincerely,

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy  
American Association for Psychoanalysis In Clinical Social Work  
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Counseling Association  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
American Occupational Therapy Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychological Association Services  
Anxiety and Depression Association of America  
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare (AABH)  
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness  
Centerstone  
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder  
Children's Hospital Association  
Clinical Social Work Association  
Crisis Text Line  
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice  
International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium  
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance  
Mental Health America  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
National Association for Rural Mental Health  
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD)  
National Board for Certified Counselors  
National Council for Mental Wellbeing  
National Federation of Families  
National Register of Health Service Psychologists  
No Health without Mental Health  
Postpartum Support International  
Psychotherapy Action Network  
Residential Eating Disorders Consortium  
Sandy Hook Promise  
SMART Recovery  
The Jed Foundation  
The Kennedy Forum  
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health  
The Trevor Project  
Treatment Communities of America  
Trust for America's Health  
Vibrant Emotional Health