



AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR Suicide Prevention

Testimony in support of SB 48 – Suicide Prevention CEU Requirements

February 8th, 2017

Dear Chair Gelser and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

On Behalf of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) I would like to express our support for SB 48. Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for Oregonians between the ages of 10 and 34 – and the eighth leading cause of death for all age groups in Oregon (CDC 2015).

45% of people who die by suicide had contact with their primary physician in the month before their death. Primary care physicians and the nurses that work with them are in a unique position to identify those at risk for suicide. Primary care physicians identified nearly one-third (30.3%) of their patients as “Mental Health Patients” (Abed Faghri, Boisvert, & Faghri, 2010) thus, primary care physicians already treat mental illness and regularly encounter people who may be at risk of suicide. **Without proper training, and awareness on suicide-specific skills, health professionals may miss warning signs and risk factors in patients under their care who are at high risk of dying by suicide.**

Mental health professionals (psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, licensed councilors, psychiatric nurses, etc.) regularly come in contact with individuals who are at risk of suicide. Despite the comorbidity of mental health disorders and suicide, (90% of people who die by suicide have a diagnosable mental health disorder at the time of their death) **the vast majority of mental health professionals do not receive routine training in suicide assessment, treatment or risk management.** This lack of expertise impacts their ability to provide comprehensive care for at risk patients.

Suicide is preventable – and SB 48 is one concrete strategy that will help prevent the tragic loss of life by suicide in Oregon. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 48. I hope that you realize the lifesaving impact that SB 48 can make in our state and will push to insure that Oregon joins 6 other states (KY, NV, NH, PA, UT & WA) in requiring continuing education for suicide risk assessment, treatment and management.

Sincerely,

Ryan Price, Oregon Area Director, AFSP

Abed Faghri, N. M., Boisvert, C. M., & Faghri, S. (2010) Understanding the expanding role of primary care physicians to primary psychiatric care physicians: Enhancing the assessment and treatment of psychiatric conditions. *Mental Health in Family Medicine*, 7(1), 17-25.