

Testimony given:

Wednesday, February 6, 2019

3pm, HRD, before the

House of Representatives

Committee on Education

During the public hearing for both **House Bill 2191** (named "Chloe's Act by the House of Representatives Education Committee in honor of the struggle our daughter Chloe - may she rest in peace - and many other students must face during their years of pursuing education), and the essential **House Bill 2327**.

Good Afternoon,

My name is Roxanne Wilson, and I am here representing myself, my husband Jason Wilson who is here with me today, our daughter Chloe Wilson, and our family, friends, and community, in support of HB 2191 and HB 2327.

This coming February 22nd will be the one-year anniversary of the day our daughter Chloe came with me to this Capitol to meet with our legislators to advocate for representation & advocacy for people with mental illness disabilities that is **equal** to that provided for people with physical or intellectual/developmental disabilities. (To clarify, I use the term mental illness disabilities to mean temporary or permanent mental health struggles which are disabling, debilitating, or otherwise significantly reduce the quality of life.) Chloe was also an active community advocate for youth, working to create and implement a peer support program at the school she transferred to in order to escape the bullying taking place at her previous school, and also working with us and other community members to reactivate our neighborhood association and get other youth involved.

This coming February 26th, four days after Chloe and I were walking together down these very halls, it will be the one-year anniversary of the morning I went to wake our beautiful baby girl for school to find her hanging cold, hard, and lifeless in her bedroom. All I could do was scream, "Oh my God! Oh my God! Chloe! Oh my God! Chloe!" as I led my husband to find his baby girl, a Daddy's girl to the core, hanging dead, having suffered through all that pain by herself while we slept with our doors secured, thinking our babies were safe.

The one thing she said - a LOT - was that she was tired of the "constant negative vibe" and hatefulness but felt powerless to do anything about it - "because nobody every listens to us," she said.

After she passed, we found a notebook with her writings in it. One of the quotes that has stuck with us the most was, "To Hate is Such an Easy, Lazy Thing; but To Love ~ That Takes Strength."

We are here to support both bills, and to support the empowerment of these brave young people here today to advocate for themselves and their peers to identify and ask for what they need. The reason we support HB 2327 are many, but pretty self-explanatory from the testimony of our soul-shattering loss of our child. The reasons we support HB 2191 are also many; however, the biggest reasons are that they not only reduce the stigma against mental health struggles by de-segregating them from physical health struggles (something Chloe and I were here last year to advocate for), but also because it opens the door wide open for youth to be able to initiate conversations with their parents about the mental and emotional challenges they are facing and how it is negatively affecting their health and safety.

We didn't know Chloe was suicidal. We were blind even to the fact that it was a real danger for our youth. Our blinders were mercilessly ripped away that morning, one year ago - the image of which will haunt us until our last breaths. We urge this committee and our entire state legislature to listen - and really hear - what our youth are asking for - before any more of our babies fall victim to that level of painful stigmatism and isolation. For every youth here today, there are thousands of their peers who have lost the hope and courage to ask for what they need - their courageous voices echo down these halls, along with Chloe's, asking to be validated, empowered, and most importantly...heard.

A special soul-deep thank you to Rep. Doherty for moving to name HB 2191 "Chloe's Act," and Rep. Alonso-Leon for seconding her motion. We had been doing relatively well, considering, holding our emotions in check until that moment. Your love and compassion, and that of your committee and staff - touched and healed our hearts more than could ever be expressed in words.

From our hearts to yours...

**THANK YOU,  
Jason & Roxanne Wilson**

