

Testimony given:

Wednesday, February 6, 2019

1pm, Hearing Rm B,

Senate Committee on Education

During the public hearings for **Senate Bills 52, 180, 485, 489, and 584**

Good Afternoon,

My name is Roxanne Wilson. My husband Jason Wilson and I were present to representing ourselves, our daughter Chloe Wilson, and our family, friends, and community, in giving public testimony on 2-6-19 to support Senate Bills 52, 180, 485, 489, and 584.

Several factors that day prevented us from delivering the most organized and timely testimony in person: (1) we had just become aware of the hearing shortly before it began, (2) it was the first time we had ever given public testimony at the Capitol, and (3) the subject matter of the bills were extremely charged with painful emotion for us. For that reason, we are also submitting our written testimony as well.

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**.

One thing Chloe used to say - 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 her quotes that WE think of often is, "To Hate is Such an Easy, Lazy Thing; but To Love ~ That Takes Strength."

We support **Senate Bills 52, 485, 180, 489, and 584**, for many reasons that are largely self-explanatory from the testimony of our soul-shattering loss of our precious child. We support suicide prevention efforts focused on the 5Cs for Education and Life Promotion: Comprehensive Collaborative Coordinated Community Care, including safety from violence and bullying (including cyberbullying) delivered IN THE SCHOOLS, trauma processing, skill-building, and empathy training **prior to** middle school (rather than psychotropic medications as a "quick-fixes," which are evidenced to double the risk of suicide in adolescents and should only be used as a last result, in which case the condition is severe enough to require hospitalization to protect the health and safety of the individual and the community), and trauma-informed and effective crisis-intervention and de-escalation education and care. We also support legislation that reduces 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), opens the door for youth to be able to initiate conversations with their parents and other adults in their care teams 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 - **and provide for these vital, life-saving needs** before any more of our babies fall victim to that level of painful stigmatism and isolation. They are facing a cyber world unlike anything ANY generation of human beings have EVER had to face in the history of mankind. We are their village, and it is OUR responsibility - collectively - to keep them safe. If these youth can muster up the courage to break out of their comfort zones to advocate for themselves and all the silenced voices of their peers

and families, then we, as their village need to step up to the plate and gain the wisdom to accept that what we have been doing is not working, have the courage to change the things that are no longer working in this new age of cyber infrastructure. The only way we will ever truly understand what they are going through and what their needs are - is to LISTEN to them - put them on EVERY advisory committee set up to make decisions affecting you, as representatives of their unique demographic group.

For every young person who has shared their testimony with you, there are thousands of their peers and even more thousands of the youths' families, who have lost the hope and courage to ask for what they need - the courageous voices of the fewecho a thousand times over down these halls, along with Chloe's, asking to be validated, empowered, and most importantly...heard.

From our hearts and souls to yours...please help us build a better world for our surviving children. In the end, they are all we have left.

Sincerely,

**Jason & Roxanne Wilson**

PS) Please see attached Vignette for our volunteer work with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention for additional written testimony, as an addendum to this email.

We have also created and freely and voluntarily share the attached awareness ribbon and awareness butterfly, including all associated words and concepts, with the State of Oregon to use and distribute as you (all) see fit, in good faith that it will help raise awareness and the desire to pull together as loving and supportive communities to set a better example than the one we have been setting so far, and to raise our children to live healthier, more quality lives.