



Kimberlee R. Jones

Kimberleerae@gmail.com

March 4, 2019

Good Afternoon Chair Gelser and Committee Members, and thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak to you in support of SB707.

My name is Kimberlee Jones and I serve on the Schools Committee for the Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide. I possess over 20 years of experience in suicide prevention and intervention. I am here today, on behalf of the Alliance and as a parent, to speak in strong support of SB707, which would put the Alliance into state statute.

The youngest person I have ever served in a professional capacity was a five-year-old boy who identified three very credible ways of ending his life. This experience ignited a passion to educate parents and adults that suicide occurs in younger children, and to provide informational and professional resources.

Another experience that ignited my passion was when my own daughter, who was a sixth grade student at a larger, urban Oregon elementary school, lost a peer to suicide. My daughter, who is vibrant, spunky, and headstrong, is also a compassionate champion for other people. Parents were not timely informed about this traumatic death, and my daughter and many other grieving students were sent home, full of emotions, to an empty house. Contributing to the perfect storm, less than a month later, these same traumatized students were presented a school play--which featured a hanging and beheading--certain to evoke strong emotions from children who had just experienced an unimaginable traumatic loss.

My daughter's loss allowed me to advocate for postvention best practices, especially now that we live in a rural community with limited resources. The Alliance provides a rural perspective to the excellent prevention work occurring across the state and allows us to weave rural prevention needs into strategies at the state level.

Alliance meetings are lively, meaningful, and productive, as Alliance members achieve the goals lined out by the YSSIP, mindful of both our inception in 2014 and of the challenges and opportunities our youth and families face today.

Committing the Alliance for Suicide Prevention to statute assures that, in the context of political leadership change, suicide prevention and intervention will remain a priority to all Oregonians through a thoughtful and committed collaboration of professionals, parents, community members, and suicide loss and attempt survivors statewide.

Thank you for the work you do and for your commitment to our Youth and to all Oregonians.