

Testimony in Support of POP 402 for SB5525

3/14/2019

Dear Honorable Senator Lee Beyer and Representative Rob Nosse, Co-Chairs and Members of the Joint Ways and Means Human Services Subcommittee:

My name is Laura Rose Misaras and I am submitting testimony in support of POP 402 for SB5525.

Our community has been impacted by suicide both among young adults and adults. As a consumer and family advocate, I hear from parents and grandparents worried about losing their children to suicide when emotions run high after the death of a classmate. Similarly, there are adults in the community who struggle with episodic and/or chronic suicide ideation, exacerbated in the aftermath of a death by suicide. Some have ended up in the emergency room as often as 18 times in 18 months, after numerous suicide attempts. Many are desperate to find support to stay alive and resolve issues through effective community-based outpatient treatment in order to heal and re-integrate into the community. There are many contributing factors to suicide and there are many critical opportunities to provide effective support before it's too late. For example, human connection through peer support following up within 24-72 hours after a hospitalization discharge at the height of an individual's risk of an attempt or death by suicide. The school teacher or counselor who notices the students who are in extreme distress could approach the students directly and/or indirectly. The cashier in a checkout line who spots an individual purchasing a lethal combination of items could connect with the individual in a way that starts a conversation that helps change the course of action. Specific trainings, strategies, evidence-based and promising practices are available; it takes leadership, teamwork, and inclusive partnership to effectively leverage our resources to scale.

The fundamental work of the Oregon Health Authority bringing together professionals, officials, community partners, advocates, family members, consumers, including loss and attempt survivors to address this complex and growing issue through a comprehensive plan for youth suicide prevention has been remarkable to witness. I have served as a member of the Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide, the Oregon Consumer Advisory Council, and the Children's System Advisory Council including the Youth Suicide Prevention subcommittee that works to bring people across Oregon together on this huge topic. There are many highlights, including but not limited to pilot projects and post-vention efforts, materials developed such as "Advocating for our loved one during a crisis: A guide for parents and caregivers while in the hospital emergency department," and more.

To expand the work of the Oregon Health Authority and its partners for adults in Oregon, adding a full-time Statewide Adult Suicide (Prevention/Intervention/Postvention) Coordinator, I strongly encourage the funding of this policy option package at this time. As Kate Brown identified the importance of adult suicide prevention in the Governor Recommended Budget last year, I hope this Committee will realize the value and urgency of the Oregon Health Authority's POP 42.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Rose Misaras