



Testimony in Support of SB485

March 22, 2019

Good Afternoon Chair Doherty, Vice-Chair Leon and Committee Members,

My name is Annette Marcus and I serve as staff to the Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide. I am here today, on behalf of the Alliance, to testify in support of SB485. This bill requires schools, colleges and universities to report youth suicides to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and participate in community plans for response after a suicide occurs.

The Alliance advises the OHA on youth suicide prevention and intervention policy and implementation of Oregon's Youth Suicide Intervention and Prevention Plan. Our 48 members are leaders from the public and private sectors, legislators, subject matter experts, suicide attempt and loss survivors, and young people from across the state of Oregon.

SB485 would strengthen SB561, which was passed in 2015. That legislation was designed to ensure that expertise in suicide, prevention, intervention and postvention is available to communities in a timely manner. It directed OHA to outline procedures for local mental health authorities (LMHAs) and allied local systems to share information within 7 days of a suspected or confirmed suicide involving individuals who are 24 years of age or younger. It also required that each county develop a local Communication Protocol and a suicide Response Protocol. OHA and the Alliance have been working with counties across the state to ensure that these protocols align with best practices, promote healing and limit the potential for suicide contagion.

SB561 has made a difference. Local Mental Health Authorities have developed suicide postvention plans and are notifying OHA when a young person has died by suicide. They have worked to engage systems partners, including schools and post-secondary education, in postvention response and reporting. In fact, Oregon is the first state in the nation to have such a law in place and is being looked to as a national leader in having a thoughtful and strategic approach to understanding and addressing the complex needs of a community that has experienced the tragedy of a youth suicide.

However, participation by school districts, public universities, post-secondary institutions of education has not been consistent across the state. While strong partnerships exist in some counties, in others a lack of communication between education systems with LMHA's and OHA has resulted in gaps in reporting, planning and coordinated response. Schools, colleges and universities are essential partners in this process. We need them at the table.

SB485 is an important step towards having more accurate information about youth suicides in Oregon and a more responsive and integrated web of support in communities where a youth suicide has occurred. When we come together to respond sensitively to a youth suicide, we are preventing further suicides. We urge you to support this legislation.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Annette A. Marcus".

Annette Marcus, MSW

Liaison for the Oregon Alliance to Prevent Suicide

For More Information: Contact Annette Marcus

Email: amarcus@aocmhp.org, Phone: 503-399-7201