

Submitter: Carol Manstrom
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3643

To the House Committee On Rules:

My name is Carol Manstrom. I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 3643. I am retired from a 26 year career in law enforcement, as a Parole and Probation Officer in Lane County. I have also worked as a probation counselor for incarcerated youth, and as a support staff at a shelter for youth who are homeless and in crisis. On Valentine's Day of 2017, my teenage son, Will, tragically died by firearm suicide. Will was a Senior in high school at that time. He was on the Varsity Track, Cross Country, and Chess teams. He was looking forward to attending Oregon State University with a major in Engineering. On the night that Will died, he was suffering from a severe mental health crisis, and, there was a fully loaded, unsecured and easily accessible handgun in the house where Will was staying. I know in my heart that Will did not want to die! But, being a teenager can be tough. We were all young once, and we know how impulsive teenagers can be. And, oftentimes, teenagers do not share their innermost feelings and struggles with others, even those closest to them. Suicide is very, very complicated. That is why suicide is sometimes referred to as "The Silent Killer." Here in Oregon, we have a critical need to increase our awareness, knowledge and expertise about our youth suicide crisis and youth mental health crisis, and we need to prioritize prevention of youth suicides. House Bill 3643 will help answer those needs. By designating October 9 of each year as Oregon Youth Suicide Awareness Day, communities all across Oregon will have the opportunity to come together to focus on, discuss and learn about this critical topic, advocate for and openly embrace those who struggle, honor the youth whose lives have been taken by suicide and support those whose lives have been shattered as a result, and increase prevention efforts. My son Will's precious life, and his bright future, are gone forever. But I believe the benefits which will result from having HB 3643 in place, will result in lives being saved. I am respectfully requesting that you please pass House Bill 3643, for the benefit and well-being of Oregon's youth and families. Thank you.