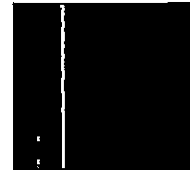


Nicole D. Zuccarello

323 Paragon Way, Castle Rock, CO 80108
303.521.1910
nicolezuccarello@gmail.com



February 12, 2018

Senate State, Veterans, & Military Affairs Committee
RE: SB18-114

Dear Senator,

I am testifying and writing to ask for your support concerning SB18-114, Preventing Suicide by Strengthening Life Skills in Students. I believe that this bill is of the utmost importance and addresses a dire situation facing our state today.

Did you know...

- The #1 cause of death for individuals age 10-24 in Colorado is suicide
- Colorado has one of the highest rates of suicide in the entire U.S.
- Both suicidal ideation and rates of completion are increasing amongst teens in Colorado
- Since 2000, the annual number of suicides in Colorado has increased by 79%

These numbers paint a desperate picture of a health crisis currently plaguing our state, and unless we work to educate our society about suicide, I fear that this problem will get even worse.

As a young woman who grew up in Colorado, this state will always have my heart and be my home. As such, I feel compelled to speak out on this issue that is so close and personal to me.

I was 16 years old the first time suicide touched my life, when a friend of mine named JT hanged himself in his family home on Valentine's Day.



On the surface, JT seemed like a fun-loving and outgoing high school student. He played sports, had a girlfriend, and enjoyed goofing off with friends. But he was hiding an incredibly troubled mind underneath it all.

Looking back, I can now see the red flags that were overlooked or missed altogether, and I can't help but wonder if this horrible event could have been prevented had there been access to better education on the topic and available resources.

I will never forget the overwhelming depression, confusion, loneliness, hopelessness, and pure devastation that followed in the wake of this news. The entire Littleton community was rocked by this event, and no one knew how to process it.

There was an incredible amount of shame and guilt felt by the students, parents, and teachers, which felt impossible to overcome for quite some time. Why had this happened? What could we have done differently? How could we have helped or intervened?

I am greatly saddened knowing that these questions are not only more prevalent today, but that they are also far more widespread.

I believe that SB18-114 is a much needed first step to address this epidemic. We cannot ignore what is so clearly a critical situation facing our entire population.

Colorado is touted as one of the most physically fit and healthy states in the country – isn't it time that the same could be said about our mental health?

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,