

February 26, 2024

Distinguished leaders of the Health & Human Services Committee,

My name is Sarah Brummett. I served as coordinator for the Colorado Suicide Prevention Commission (Commission) from its launch in 2014 until 2016, when I became the Director for the Office of Suicide Prevention (OSP). In 2022, I became the Director for the Executive Committee for the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, the entity which served as the model for Colorado's Commission inclusive of public-private sector leadership.

I am providing this statement to express my support for the continuation of the Commission. Formalized collaborations across the public and private sector, such as Colorado's Suicide Prevention Commission, advance key elements of the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention and underscore the recognition that every sector, organization, and community has a role to play when it comes to suicide prevention.

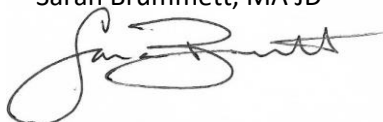
From its launch in 2014, the Commission has allowed the OSP to formalize collaborations across state agencies and with other suicide prevention leaders through a coordinated and unified effort. This collaboration led to the development of many notable efforts, including one of the nation's leading examples for successful follow up support after a behavioral or mental health crisis, which is known as the Colorado Follow Up Project. This program provided lifesaving telephonic follow up support for over 10,000 people last year alone. The Commission remains a symbol of Colorado's bipartisan commitment to the issue, which has allowed the OSP to be more competitive for federal grant opportunities, which often require applicants to form or sustain an advisory body like the Commission. These federal grants are crucial in providing support for key infrastructure and evidence-informed programming in Colorado.

Upon passage of the Commission, Colorado was selected by national partners as the state with key infrastructure and political support sufficient for a pilot program known as the Colorado-National Collaborative (CNC) that served as a template for CDC's Comprehensive Suicide Prevention grant program which now supports work in 24 states across the country. The work of the CNC started in six high-need Colorado counties and, with additional federal funding, now supports life-saving work across 15 counties and has been recognized by the White House. The support, commitment, and advice that Colorado's Commissioners provide to the Office helps to inform state priorities, enhances accountability, and exponentially enriches suicide prevention in the state.

This Committee has the opportunity to sustain Colorado's position as a leader in the field of suicide prevention by passing a resolution to continue the Suicide Prevention Commission.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue,

Very truly yours,
Sarah Brummett, MA JD



Written Testimony in support of HB24-1252: Sunset Suicide Prevention Commission – House Health and Human Services Committee

Dear Madam Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB24-1252.

My name is Stephanie Perez-Carrillo, and I work as a Statewide Philanthropy Lead at Caring for Colorado Foundation managing our Healthy Youth and Public Policy Advocacy portfolios. Caring for Colorado Foundation is a grantmaking foundation that works to create equity in health, well-being and opportunity for Colorado's children and families. I currently represent the philanthropic seat on the Suicide Prevention Commission and have served in this capacity for almost one year.

I joined the commission last year because this is the number one issue we hear the most about from grantees and communities across the state. We know that the number of suicide deaths among youth has increased drastically over the last decade. In fact, the number of youth who died by suicide nearly doubled between 2010 and 2021, according to data from the Colorado Children's Campaign Kids COUNT in Colorado report.

Since 2022, I have been participating in the Youth-Specific Initiatives Workgroup. The workgroup created recommendations to support LGBTQIA2S+ youth and young adults, which the Commission approved and adopted in 2021. I use the Commission recommendations to inform my role at Caring for Colorado and to ensure that our organization and grantees are supporting and affirming LGBTQIA2S+ youth as a way to prevent suicidal despair, for example. This is just one of many recommendations that the Commission has discussed, voted on, and approved.

The Suicide Prevention Commission is just as needed today as it was in 2014 when it was created. Thank you and I urge your yes vote on HB24-1252.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Perez-Carrillo

Stephanie Perez-Carrillo
Statewide Philanthropy Lead, Caring for Colorado



House Health & Human Services

02/27/2024 Upon Adjournment

HB24-1252 Sunset Suicide Prevention Commission

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
<p>Paul Reich</p> <p>For themselves</p>	<p>My name is Paul Reich. I represent the business community on the Suicide Prevention Commission.</p> <p>As a long-time resident on the Western Slope and a business wonder in rural Colorado I know how important the work of the Commission is in encouraging communities to engage in suicide prevention efforts. The Commission’s work around youth and older adult suicide prevention, its recommendations for best practices, and its support of the Office of Suicide Prevention are critical to reducing suicide in our rural communities, and encouraging the work at the local level of suicide prevention advocates.</p> <p>I am writing to support the continuation of the Suicide Prevention Commission.</p> <p>The Older Adults Workgroup, which brings together members of various older adult serving agencies, has recommended making suicide prevention gatekeeper training more accessible for older adults and those who work with older adults. As a suicide prevention gatekeeper training instructor, I know it is critical to continue to support this recommendation to make these trainings available to residents in our rural communities.</p> <p>I encourage the Legislature to support the continuation of the Suicide Prevention Commission and support the work of that body in reducing suicides in the state.</p>
<p>Lea Bernstein-Holmes</p> <p>For themselves</p>	<p>CDPHE Written Testimony</p> <p>Concerning the Sunset of the Suicide Prevention Commission</p> <p>Winter/Spring 2024</p>

	<p>To Whom It May Concern,</p> <p>My name is Lea Bernstein-Holmes. I represented the Colorado School Safety Resource Center (CSSRC) seat on the Suicide Prevention Commission until this month when I resigned from the Center.</p> <p>Before my employment with the CSSRC, I worked as a mental health provider and district administrator overseeing mental health in public education for the last 15 years. Suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention services are something that I am extremely passionate about. I have personally seen the lives of students saved when best practices for suicide prevention are followed, and have also seen the devastation that is caused within a community when a life is lost to suicide.</p> <p>I am writing this letter to support the continuation of the Suicide Prevention Commission. I wholeheartedly believe that while suicide is mostly preventable, it is also a community issue that a single entity does not have the power to stop. The Suicide Prevention Commission creates opportunities for different entities and interested parties to have a space to communicate, collaborate, and learn from each other, ultimately bringing back ideas and best practices to their agencies and communities.</p> <p>My work with the Office of Suicide Prevention (OSP) as a Commissioner and a member of the Youth-Specific Initiatives Workgroup allowed me to build relationships with OSP staff and other commissioners and created natural and authentic opportunities for collaboration. As a result of my time on the Commission, the CSSRC and OSP were able to collaborate on grant opportunities for different schools, districts, and BOCES and work together on training and logistics which resulted in more efficient funding and support to our Colorado schools.</p> <p>Continuing the Suicide Prevention Commission is imperative to continuing the collaborative efforts across different agencies. It has been a pleasure to serve as a Commissioner and to work closely with OSP. The light and hope that the OSP team brings into the suicide prevention space is something that is felt state-wide and is apparent in the Suicide Prevention Commission meetings and workgroups. Please feel free to contact me with any additional questions.</p>
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	<p>Lea Bernstein-Holmes, LCSW, M.Ed lea.bernstein@gmail.com 720-771-7192</p>
<p>Aimee Resnick For herself</p>	<p>My name is Aimee Resnick, and I am a 19-year-old from HD 37 and SD 27 in Centennial, Colorado. I previously served on the Suicide Prevention Commission as a representative from the Colorado Youth Advisory Council and Co-Chaired the Youth-Specific Initiatives Workgroup. I urge you to support the continuation of this Commission.</p> <p>Serving on the Suicide Prevention Commission saved my life. I joined the Suicide Prevention Commission just months after attempting suicide myself. I was sixteen. I felt vulnerable, helpless, and isolated. Above all, I was deeply traumatized by Colorado’s behavioral healthcare systems: this compelled me to seek state-wide change.</p> <p>The Suicide Prevention Commission welcomed me into a warm community of dedicated, empathetic leaders. With the shared goal of improving mental health in our state, I reveled in the collaborative nature of our Commission and the concrete impact of our recommendations. The Suicide Prevention Commission gave me purpose.</p> <p>I am so proud of the recommendations I helped craft in the Youth-Specific Initiatives Workgroup. Together, we passed critical proposals to affirm LGBTQIA2S+ youth, empower racial equity in prevention, and address the intersection of disordered eating and suicide. I cannot wait to see the recommendations that the Commission passes in the years to come.</p> <p>I cannot emphasize enough how much serving on the Suicide Prevention Commission has impacted my development and well-being. More importantly, I know that our work helps countless others across the state flourish. Thank you, and I urge a yes vote.</p>

CDPHE Written Testimony
Concerning the Sunset of the Suicide Prevention Commission
Winter/Spring 2024

To: House Health & Human Services Committee

My name is Paul Bretz. It was my privilege to represent the Interfaith Organizations seat and serve as the Private Co-Chair on the Suicide Prevention Commission for 7 years, as well as engaging in a range of Commission workgroups over that time period. My impetus for serving on the Commission came from both personal and professional passions. On the personal side, my life and my children's lives were impacted by the death by suicide of more than one of their peers, and my own peers. Professionally I direct a counseling center and support Clinicians every week in caring for those experiencing suicidal ideation, suicide attempt survivors and family members and friends of those who are grieving the death of a loved one by suicide.

I am writing to offer staunch support for the continuation of the State of Colorado Suicide Prevention Commission. Our state has every reason to be proud of being recognized nationally as a leader in comprehensive and state-wide efforts to support a wide range of suicide prevention initiatives and continuing to seek initiatives that demonstrate effectiveness through empirical research, along with qualitative input from the individuals and communities impacted by these initiatives. While we have implemented such initiatives as Emergency Room follow up and the Gun Shop project, and other wide ranging initiatives, it still feels like our work has just begin in the ten years of the commissions efforts, and that we have the energy and passion to continue this work for as long as needed to see Colorado realize the vision of Zero Suicide.

The main reason I support the Commission continuing is that it has allowed a forum for widely diverse constituents representing various professional, cultural, and regional interests to help shape and support implementation of substantial suicide prevention across the state of Colorado. My own personal concerns involve suicide prevention initiatives that target gun safety, the primary lethal means for death of men, and many women in middle age. In addition, the LGBTQ+ population across the life span needs our ongoing attention and resource development and expansion to address the added levels of suicidal despair often experienced by members of all ages in this population, and under-served and under-resourced communities are also of key concern and need additional focus. Thank you for considering my input on this crucial decision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul A. Bretz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "B".

Paul A. Bretz, D.Min., LCSW, MHSA
CEO
Centus Counseling, Consulting and Education

CDPHE Written Testimony
Concerning the Sunset of the Suicide Prevention Commission
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Sincerely,

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Paul A. Bretz, D.Min., LCSW, MHSA
CEO
Centus Counseling, Consulting and Education

Hello Health and Human Services Committee members, and thank you for your time.

My name is Liss Smith, and I am the Communications and Advocacy Director at Inside Out Youth Services in Colorado Springs, CO. I also represent the Nonprofit seat on the Suicide Prevention Commission. I am a new commissioner, but have been familiar with the work of the Commission for many years in my local suicide prevention work, and have great respect for the Commission and its workgroups.

I joined the Commission because in my work at Inside Out Youth Services, which supports lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual, and two-spirit (LGBTQIA2+) youth, I have seen too many of our youth participants struggle with suicidal ideation. Sadly, I have also been witness to the aftermath when we have lost youth participants to suicide.

Moreover, I'm not the only one who has lost dear friends to suicide, and I think of them all the time — their potential, their kindness, their love, and all the things they didn't get to see or do or accomplish or enjoy. I think about all the times we didn't get to spend together, and all the things I could have done, said, or noticed. I've been hard on myself about that, but that doesn't serve anyone, least of all the memories of my friends. All I can do is move forward, try to help, learn, and keep them in my heart. The Commission is a space of learning, moving forward, and trying to help, and it honors the lived experiences of its commissioners to create effective strategies for suicide prevention.

For these reasons, and many more, I am writing today to support the continuation of the Suicide Prevention Commission.

The Suicide Prevention Commission does important, impactful, and community-centered work that literally saves lives. Before becoming a commissioner, I used Commission recommendations, resources, and data to inform my work with the Suicide Prevention Collaborative of El Paso County, and my work educating adults on how to prevent youth suicide.

As a commissioner, a community member, a suicide loss survivor, and an attempt survivor, I respectfully ask that you vote to continue the Suicide Prevention Commission indefinitely.