

April 3, 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.

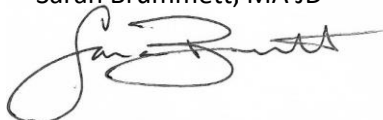
Upon passage of the Commission, Colorado was selected by national partners as the state with key infrastructure and political support sufficient for a pilot program known as the Colorado-National Collaborative (CNC) that served as a template for CDC's Comprehensive Suicide Prevention grant program which 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



Senate Written Testimony
Concerning HB24-1252 - Sunset of the Suicide Prevention Commission
Spring 2024

To: Senate 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 initiatives 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 cursive script that reads "Paul A. Bretz".

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

Dear Senator Michaelson-Jenet,

I am writing to support the continuation of the Suicide Prevention Commission.

I have been privileged to represent the Colorado Business Community on the Suicide Prevention Commission since July of 2021.

As a long-time resident on the Western Slope and a business leader 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.

I also serve as the Executive Director of The Second Wind Fund, a statewide organization that removes barriers to care for youth and families/guardians and provides 12 to 20 free therapy sessions with Colorado licensed professionals for youth up to age 19 across the state. I recognize in this role the important work of the Commission to help support our organization's efforts to reduce the incidence of youth suicide in Colorado.

Since joining the Commission, I have been participating in the Older Adults Workgroup, which brings together members of various older adult serving agencies. Last year this group 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.

I have also participated in the Youth-Specific Initiatives Workgroup. This group created recommendations to support LGBTQIA2S+ youth and young adults. I use these recommendations in my role at The Second Wind Fund to ensure that our organization is affirming LGBTQIA2S+ youth to prevent suicidal despair.

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.

Sincerely,

Paul Reich
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