

February 19, 2021



RE: HB2281: Establishing and implementing 988 as the suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline in Kansas.

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my strong support for HB2281 to establish 988 as a dedicated, direct line to trained personnel who can assist individuals who are experiencing thoughts of suicide.

On September 21, 2019, I lost my wonderful, 28-year-old niece to suicide at Fort Riley, Kansas. Her death remains a source of continuing agony for those closest to her, as we struggle to understand why we weren't able to prevent her death.

Unfortunately, she did not feel she could share her perceptions and emotions with us without upsetting us. We didn't know how to make a safe space for her to express herself.

If there had been help just a phone call away, trained people with whom she could share her thoughts and fears without judgment, she might have used that resource. It might have made a difference for her and countless others who silently experience persistent thoughts of suicide.

Suicide rates are higher than average for Fort Riley personnel and their families. A suicide costs not only a precious life, but it devastates the families left behind. In our case, three young siblings were placed into separate homes in the aftermath.

Please consider that suicide is not just a single tragic event, it is an ongoing public health crisis. I beg you to move forward with funding to address this critical public health issue by establishing a 988 hotline for those in need of someone to listen.

Sincerely,

Katrina R. Miller