

February 27, 2020

Madam Chair and Members of the Finance Committee,

I've called Anne Arundel County home since 2001, and I want to speak out to make it a better place. I wanted to demonstrate my support for the bill you are introducing that authorizes the State Highway Administration to illuminate electronic signs along Maryland highways to help prevent suicide.

My 32 year-old daughter, Brittani, died by suicide on December 14, 2019. That day has deeply affected our family, her friends, and co-workers. Although I was unable to save her, I want to do anything within my means to assist in suicide prevention. No family should have to endure the pain we have experienced.

Brittani was a positive light to those around her. She possessed a great sense of humor and always had people laughing. She was always ready with advice and empathy for others.

She understood that we all play a part in taking care of each other to make this world a better place. She volunteered in many homeless shelters, soup kitchens, homebuilding projects, food/coat/blanket drives, and tutored inner-city children.

She had an incredibly strong work ethic. She pushed boundaries and helped grow the business of anyone she ever worked for. Then she started her own business in conjunction with Helping Up Mission. She kept that going for a couple of years until her mental health took a toll on her, which prevented her from working. That was extremely difficult to watch. **She lost her business, her home, her fiancé, her good credit, and ultimately her life.**

I can't tell you how many times my daughter drove to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge to jump. Then for some reason, she would turn around and go home. I would then receive a bill in the mail, because she hadn't planned on needing to pay the toll afterward. It absolutely broke my heart each time this happened. I wouldn't have known otherwise, since she kept her struggles to herself for the most part.

People who have suicidal ideations are searching for a solution to their pain. Perhaps reading one of these signs will remind them that someone cares for them. Providing a number for them to call is imperative too, because people with mental health issues are often not able to expend the energy to research how to get help.

I'd also like to encourage you to look into how we can get nets installed under the major bridges in Maryland as they do in other areas. Dozens of Marylanders have died by this method when just a simple solution could help deter the suicidal person, and could save their family and friends a lot of pain. Additionally, many people have jumped and survived by some miracle, but the Coast Guard and Maryland Police have resources that could be utilized elsewhere if the nets were in place; not to mention avoiding the traffic delays caused each time this happens.

Thank you for your efforts to help us prevent suicide!

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