

February 22nd, 2020
Senate Finance Committee
11 Bladen Street
3 E Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support to Bill to place suicide prevention messages on electronic highway signs

Madam Chair and Members of the Finance Committee:

My name is Jessica Beckerman and I am a strong advocate for this bill. I grew up in Laurel, Maryland and now reside in the greater Annapolis area.

On May 12th, 2012, which happened to be Mother's Day that year, I was driving back from St. Michaels, Maryland with my mother after spending a lovely weekend together. We ran into traffic on I-95 once we got closer to Laurel and took an alternate route to return home. I later learned that traffic was due to my brother dying by suicide off an I-95 overpass.

I received a phone call when I pulled into our driveway from a close friend who asked me if I had seen my older brother Mike that day. She heard from a friend on the Laurel police force that there was a suicide on I-95 off of the Brooklyn Bridge Road overpass, and that they were saying it was my brother. I had to inform my parents that their son had died. I then began the painful preparations of figuring out how to transport his body to a morgue, call immediate family members - including my sister - and plan a funeral for my 29-year-old brother.

The reason my brother opted for that particular method of ending his life was because in 2001, a schoolmate of his, also took his life on this same bridge.

We as a community should be doing anything we can to prevent these tragic losses of life and for the pain of all of those lives impacted – from the families like mine that will always be mourning the death of a loved one, to those who were unfortunate enough to be on the road that day. I expect they are still traumatized to this day for having witnessed a man jumping to his death.

I cannot say for certain if having a sign on the highway that day would have changed his mind. But there is a chance. And it will certainly help reach the many drivers and passengers who are or may in the future be considering ending their life.

Sincerely,

Jessica Beckerman
806 Shady Oaks Road
West River, Maryland
20778