

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tara Holmes Ball, and I strongly oppose all of the proposed changes to HB 1635.

I lost my son, Connor, to suicide on October 24, 2011. Connor was a kind, caring, and intelligent young man—an honor student, an Eagle Scout, and an athlete. His death changed my family forever and deeply impacted his school and community. In response to this loss, I became an advocate for suicide prevention and founded Connor's Climb Foundation to prevent other families from experiencing the same tragedy.

Connor's Climb Foundation provides the suicide prevention education required in the original bill at no cost to New Hampshire schools. To date, we have trained 140 schools across the state, more than 15,000 adults, and over 40,000 students. This work has consistently shown that education saves lives.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death in New Hampshire for young people ages 10 to 24. Our youth are struggling, and too many lives are being lost. Suicide is preventable, and early identification, education, and intervention are proven tools.

HB 1635, in its current form, saves lives. It ensures that school personnel are trained to recognize warning signs and respond appropriately, creating safer school environments for students. Any proposed changes to this bill would weaken its protections and put young people at greater risk.

Students spend much of their lives in school, placing educators and staff in a unique position to notice warning signs and take action. Clear, consistent training requirements provide the confidence and guidance needed to act quickly and appropriately. Altering this bill in any way will harm the youth of New Hampshire.

I strongly urge the committee to reject all proposed changes to HB 1635 and to uphold the bill as written. Our children deserve strong, consistent, and proven suicide prevention measures in every school.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to protecting the youth of New Hampshire.

Sincerely,
Tara Holmes Ball
Connor's Mom and Founder, Connor's Climb Foundation