

Testimony for SB 808

April 3, 2019

Good afternoon Chair Monnes Anderson, Vice-chair Linthicum, and members of the committee.

My name is Lisa Burk I am an emergency department registered nurse. I have been an RN for 15 years specializing in emergency care. I have had hundreds of hours of continuing education in order to maintain my CEN (certification of emergency nursing) however I have had very little education for suicide risk and management, and none of it is required.

Recently I have become a suicide prevention advocate, I have recognized over the years how the lack of education has affected lives of my patients and friends. Nearly 2 years ago I had a patient come to the emergency department with issues not related to mental health. Several hours after discharge he took his life. Upon reflection I feel that there were subtle clues he displayed which I missed. With proper education I feel that I could have determined his suicidal risk and perhaps prevented his death.

My friend Lisa's son reached out many times to his primary care physician for issues related to coping and stress. He died by suicide without ever being screened for suicide because his doctor and nurses did not recognize his risk factors.

I am aware that there are many complex factors of suicide risk management and treatment which are not addressed by this bill. But education is a simple and effective way manage one aspect. Many of my colleagues have expressed to me that they recognize the need for education for suicide prevention as well.

We as emergency care and primary care providers are the gatekeepers for our communities. People seek help from primary care and emergency departments long before they are seen by mental health providers. Families count on us for having the skills and education which will allow us to recognize those who are contemplating suicide. We need to standardize education for suicide risk and management so we can keep our friends and community members safe. Please support SB 808.

Lisa Burk BSN, RN, CEN

ljmcburk@gmail.com/971-241-1871

Affiliations:

Mid Valley Coastal Chapter Emergency Nurses Association- President elect

Oregon Emergency Nurses Association –Government Affairs Committee member

Salem Health West Valley Hospital- Emergency Department Charge Nurse