

Chair Sanchez, Vice Chairs Moore-Green and Nosse,

My name is Angela Perry and I am the Board Chair for the AFSP Oregon Chapter. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today speaking in support of HB 2361, Representative Salinas' legislation on prioritizing access to health care provider incentive program by behavior health service providers serving Latino, Latina and Latin X individuals in Morrow, Malheur, Hood River and Umatilla Counties.

I am going to speak on Hood River and Umatilla Counties as those are areas that our chapter has worked in. Between 2011 and 2017 Hood River County averaged 3 deaths by suicide per year, in Umatilla County that number was 14 per year.

On average, one person dies by suicide every 8 hours in the state, and for every one person who dies by suicide at least 25 others attempt. Suicide ranks as the second leading cause of death for residents ages 15-24, third for those ages 25-34, fourth for ages 35-54, and the 8th leading cause of death overall in the state.

While I find these statistics daunting, my interest in suicide prevention is also very personal. I have lost friends and family members to suicide, and I also live with suicidal ideations and have attempted. It was after one of those losses that I found American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. As a white female with lived experience, I know how challenging it is to find quality mental health care...for those who are Latino/Latina/Latin X those providers are even more limited, in rural communities that number is even smaller. With a search on Psychology Today, a website I use to look into providers in my area and found that in Hood River County I found only four providers who work with Latino populations serving a population of 7,000, in Umatilla County there were only two serving over 20,000 with the next closest being in either Portland or Bend and sometimes over three hours away.

Connecting individuals struggling with their mental health to quality health care is a vital component in preventing self-harm and possible death by suicide. HB 2361 will help to change that and the need is vital. In order to save lives they must be able to access mental health professionals who are both trained in suicide prevention as well as be competent in working with those Latino/Latina and Latin X populations.