

Submitter: Shannon Dunn
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3643

I write to you today in support of HB 3643 designating October 9 as Youth Suicide Awareness Day. Thank you Representative Lucetta Elmer for sponsoring this bill. I do not need to convince Oregon elected officials to believe me when I say youth suicide is a leading cause of death among our children. Furthermore, a day of awareness will not prevent suicide from happening altogether. However, what I aim to convince you of is the absolute necessity to give hope to the kids and families who continue to and will continue to suffer from the aftershocks of losing Mikalynn Morris by suicide last October in McMinnville. Our children are not well. And as representatives of Oregonians all over the state, I can say YOUR children are not well. Are we helpless? Are our hands tied? Would it be better to not really talk about suicide because it feels crummy? Can we do anything?

One thing we can do is offer is hope. We cannot afford to lose this burning ember of hope and showing kids we care. Designating a day to pause, reflect and plan for the futures of our teens going forth in the world is an opportunity to bring people together for a common purpose....to invest in relationships with kids and each other and honestly, I think that is what Mikalynn would want as she looks down on us from Heaven. My son, Griffin, had all of his morning classes with Mikalynn the morning before she took her life at lunchtime. It is something I have really only shared in hushed whispers with a few other moms. He said she seemed good--they worked on an assignment together. I will never forget his reaction with a slew of expletives in the backyard when finding out the news his friend was gone. He is forever changed. So you never really know what is going on with someone on the inside and he has some questions he won't ever get the answers to. With the absence of answers, can we offer Griffin and his friends hope; a ray of light out of some deep darkness? Can we please designate this day for Mikalynn and let us devote time, energy and resources to supporting my kid, your kid, Oregon's kids? I urge you, please vote in support of this bill and by doing so you will give value to the feelings of all of these kids and families in McMinnville and give us all a bright glimmer of hope to Love Like Mikalynn. #LLM

Sincerely,
Shannon M. Dunn