

Submitter:

Jocelyn Middleton

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

House Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB3643

October 9, 2024, started off like a normal day for me. It was the same as every other day: awake up, get ready, drive to school, walk to my best friend's house, and then walk to school together. It was the same—laughing together as we walked into school, complimenting each other's outfits we decided to wear that day, saying we needed to hang out soon, and saying, "I'll see you later, I love you" when we had to part ways to go to class. A normal day, until my entire life got flipped upside down.

I walked to my brother's car after school to go home when I got a call from a friend. I answered, thinking she was going to tell me a funny story or something that happened during her day at school. She was crying and told me to call her when I got home, so I did. Completely clueless, I set down my backpack in my room and called her. That's when I heard the words that changed everything. "Mikalynn committed suicide."

At first, I didn't believe it. How could someone so pure and loving do that to herself? Thoughts raced in my head as I sat on my bedroom floor, alone, screaming and crying, wondering why she felt like that was the best option for her. I also wondered how I never knew she was hurting. The question "How did I not know?" was in my head constantly, and it still is, 5 months later. I was with her that morning. We were trying to make plans to hang out soon, and now that can't ever happen again.

About two weeks after Mikalynn passed away, a classmate of mine started texting me that he was going to kill himself. I helped as much as I possibly could and reached out to my mom to also help him. He got mad at me for getting adults involved, but today, he's alive. I like to believe that, because of what I had just gone through, he felt like he could trust me to help him.

The more we talk about suicide prevention and share our stories, I believe suicidal people will have trust in the people trying to help. Most people think that if you're depressed or suicidal, it's obvious, or they see it as attention-seeking, but it's not. Suicide is real, and you aren't always going to be able to identify it—just like my best friend. I once heard a video from Robin Williams that said, "If you're that depressed, reach out to someone. Suicide is a permanent solution to temporary problems." Nothing in your life is as permanent as taking your own life.

Something that every single person in this room can relate to is the want or feeling of being seen. It doesn't matter who or what—we have all felt this since we were young. How many times have you heard or said as a small child, "Mom, watch this!" or "Look

what I can do"? Although we might want to feel seen in different ways as we grow older and mature, it's something every person wants. Having an entire day dedicated to suicide awareness could make people feel seen and remind them that they're not alone.

When I was told that there was a bill waiting to get passed to make October 9th Youth Suicide Awareness Day in Oregon, and I could have the opportunity to come up in front of these amazing people to share why I think it's important, I couldn't wait. I will forever use my voice as much as I possibly can to help people. So with that, I would like to say thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak up, and I kindly ask everyone to love like Mikalynn. Thank you for considering this bill as it could potentially save lives.