

Submitter:

Kim Morris

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

House Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB3643

On October 9, 2024, I got a call from my daughter that she needed me, and she needed me now! My dear granddaughter had shot herself. As I rushed 15 blocks that only takes 5 minutes it seemed like forever. My daughter (Katie), son-in-law and I will never forget, nor can we ever erase what we saw that day as we tried to save Mikalynn. We lost our girl that day.

We can never thank the first responders that came that day enough, they were so kind and supportive. As we were standing in the front yard waiting for the process to be over, which is a long and emotional process, we were asked by the school administrators what they should say to staff, parents and the kids at the school. Katie and I said the truth. We didn't want rumors or stories, but most of all if we were honest and shared it could hopefully save another child from suicide and a family from the pain we were going through. The community has wrapped themselves around us in support and love. I feel our honesty and openness has opened up lines of communication. This hit our community and even surrounding communities really hard. Our community is blessed to have an organization like Younglife. A place where kids can gather, cry and support each other. The day after Mikalynn past they wrote sayings on the exterior of the house with chalk. In big letters on the front was #LLM, a sweet girl put that up there and said if meant LoveLikeMikalynn. Mikalynn was smart, beautiful, sweet and truly kind. She truly loved people.

People think of the big things that are missed when a child passes-getting their license, prom, graduation, college and marriage. But the everyday little things are even harder. Going to the store and seeing the snacks you'd always buy, looking at the spot they would always sit in the living room, the toothbrush in the drawer, their voice and phrases they'd say. I talk to Mikalynn every morning and I cry every day because I miss her. I apologize to her for not saving her. I have gone through the anger stage. Who was mean to her? Who said something to her that day that made her choose to leave this earth? To the blame stage of what did I miss? Why didn't I ask her more often if she was ok? To sadness for not hugging her harder, telling her I love her more and talking with her longer. Every day is a challenge.

People know what we have gone through, so they feel comfortable opening up to us, which I'm glad they do. I'm sadden by the stories I hear. Kids telling others "Go kill yourself" this is unacceptable and horrific. I wonder if the one saying that really understands the consequences of their words. This is a forever action, and you can't change your mind. Too many parents have told me that their child tried and failed. It saddens me that their child felt that low, but it also makes me sad that Mikalynn was

successful. It's a hard time in our society, especially for our kids. They have social media, pressures and expectations placed on them. Kids can come from great families, be loved beyond measure and still have struggles.

Having a day across our state is a start. It will help breakdown the stigma and tell people it's time to talk to about suicide. It's time for our kids to be seen as kids with emotions and struggles and challenges before we see them as a statistic.

We ask you to LoveLikeMikalynn and designate October 9th as Oregon Youth Suicide Awareness Day. Let's help families and save our youth. #LLM