

Hon. MaryAnne Kinney
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Knox, ME 04986

April 5, 2023

Testimony in support of LD 1263 An Act to Require School Identification Cards to Include the Telephone Number of a Suicide Prevention Hotline

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, members of the Education and Cultural Affairs committee, my name is MaryAnne Kinney from Knox, ME and I am here to testify in support of LD 1263 An Act to Require School Identification Cards to Include the Telephone Number of a Suicide Prevention Hotline.

As I was finalizing my written testimony yesterday (Tuesday, April 4, 2023) I was remembering a young lady who, while a student at Erskine Academy chose to take her own life 12 years ago yesterday (4/4/2011) rather than seek help. Haley was 1 month shy of her 17th birthday. When I read a Facebook post of NH Governor Chris Sununu signing a bill on August 3, 2022 “require(ing) every public school ID in NH to include the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number” it made me think that Maine could also implement this simple act and possibly save countless lives.

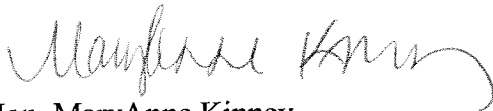
There will be others testifying with statistics around suicide numbers among school aged children so I will not bore you with those stats. My own daughter is almost exactly the same age Haley was when she took her life, Theresa will be 17 at the end of this month. That suddenly brought home why I needed to try and have this become standard in Maine’s schools. I have read many a news headline in recent years of school aged children as young as 8 years old committing suicide in area schools. Sadly, during the lockdowns around Covid-19, those stories became more frequent.

In talking with my daughter about possibly having her government class come and testify on this bill, she was very intrigued. Her teacher was hoping to bring the whole class but scheduling conflicts this week prevented them from being here today. After a meeting last week with the high school principal at Mt. View High School in Thorndike, I commented on the fact that the school had an 8 ½ x 11 paper posted at the entrance of the school with the 800 # for the suicide hotline in the window. I took a moment to mention LD 1263. He was very much interested and planned to submit testimony electronically. Please take a moment to find his testimony when you can, his name is Tom Gray, he and I had several emails back and forth about this so I want to make sure his testimony is not overlooked.

With the newly created 3 digit number (988) for the hotline, it is hopeful that more awareness will be brought to this resource for those who are troubled. Having the number on all student ID’s will bring awareness even to those who are not contemplating ending their own lives. It has the potential to put the number in the hands of someone who could make the call for advice on how to help a friend in need.

I’m sure there are many others who can far better answer questions on this issue than I, but if you have any for me I will do my best to answer them.

Thank you for your time,



Hon. MaryAnne Kinney
Knox, ME