

JOINT  
SENATE HEALTH & WELFARE COMMITTEE  
AND  
HOUSE HEALTH & WELFARE COMMITTEE  
Friday, February 12, 2016

ATTACHMENT 4

02/12/16  
Amanda Hundt

Testimony of Amanda Hundt  
February 12, 2016  
Joint Health & Welfare Committee

My name is Amanda Hundt, and I have been volunteering as a crisis phone responder at the Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline for the past two years. I am also a member of the Board for the Idaho Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

I have come here today to express my deep concern about the level of mental health care provided in the State of Idaho. Over my two years at the Hotline, I have spoken with individuals from all corners of the state, who were experiencing mental health crises. These individuals cover a wide variety of demographics, but they all have one thing in common: they are reaching out to the Hotline in desperation, not knowing how to turn their lives around. They are reaching out to the Hotline because they have very few options to access mental health care, and they have no where else to go.

Be it the gaps in health insurance coverage, the inaccessibility of medical professionals in rural areas, or the stigma surrounding mental illness, Idahoans have extreme difficulty in accessing and receiving quality mental health care.

Idaho has consistently been among the top ten suicide rates in the nation. Our citizens, our people are in pain, isolated, and choosing to end their own lives out of hopelessness. We've seen this continue for far too long, and it's time for Idaho to get off that top ten list.

I stand before you today, a survivor of my own suicide attempt over a decade ago. I know the hopelessness and isolation that comes from poor mental health. I know the fear and the stigma that comes with accessing what help there is. And I know, first hand, that access to quality mental health care does prevent needless death as it prevented mine. I know, first hand, that the Hotline saves lives, as it saved mine.

I urge you, as myself, as a volunteer crisis counselor, and on behalf of the board of AFSP-ID to move forward on the recommendations presented by Dr. Polk and the Suicide Prevention Core Team, with particular emphasis on: sustainable funding for the Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline; creation of an office of suicide prevention; continued youth training through funding for the Idaho Lives Project; and a public awareness campaign to reduce the stigma of mental health issues.

Thank you for your time.

