



Connecticut Department of Public Health

Testimony Presented Before the Public Health Committee

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Senate Bill 1085, An Act Concerning Suicide Prevention

The Department of Public Health (DPH) provides the following information regarding Senate Bill 1085, which would establish the Connecticut Suicide Advisory Board in statute and require continuing medical education on suicide prevention. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

DPH supports preserving the existing structure of the Connecticut Suicide Advisory Board (CTSAB), which is tri-chaired by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Department of Children and Families, and the Connecticut Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. It is the single state-level advisory board in Connecticut that addresses suicide prevention, intervention and response across the lifespan. The CTSAB membership, which is 700 strong, is an active and committed group of state agency staff and volunteers from various community sectors who have a vested interest in this issue. The Board and its subcommittees meet monthly, and it has branched out to form Regional Suicide Advisory Boards; one within each of the five DMHAS Regional Behavioral Health Action Organizations across the state. The CTSAB oversees implementation of the State Suicide Prevention Plan 2025, which has been updated every five years as far back as the year 2000. DPH, DMHAS, and DCF lend different areas of expertise to these statewide and targeted work group efforts.

DPH would like to provide the following information regarding Section 2. Suicide is preventable and trainings occur around the state to teach people about recognizing the signs of suicide and how to start the conversation with patients and loved ones. Suicide deaths and nonfatal suicidal behavior, including suicide attempts and other forms of self-directed violence, are a growing problem in the United States and Connecticut is no exception. Suicide is a leading cause of death for our residents. An annual average of 403 Connecticut residents died from suicide from 2015 through 2019, which is a 14% increase from the annual average of 351 residents between 2010 and 2014. DPH Connecticut Violent Death Reporting System (CTVDRS) data show that Connecticut, unlike other states, has not experienced an increasing suicide trend among teenagers 11-17 years old. Since 2015, the 11-17 age group's suicide rate was the lowest (1.3) compared to all other age categories (18-24, 25-44, and 45+). However, since 2015, the overall suicide rate in Connecticut increased from 9.6 to 10.4 per 100,000, mainly driven by middle-aged, non-Hispanic, white males.

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Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected all aspects of Connecticut residents' lives, has triggered widespread anxiety and exacerbated people's existing mental health issues. Calls to the suicide prevention crisis line have increased since the start of the pandemic, although there has not been a corresponding increase in deaths due to suicide.

If in a crisis, residents of Connecticut can call 211 or 1-800-273-8255 (TALK) or text "CT" to 741741 for immediate support.

Thank you for your consideration of this information. DPH encourages committee members to reach out with any questions.