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Testimony by Marcia DuFore
On behalf of the Amplify, Inc.
Public Health Committee
In Opposition to HB 1085 An Act Concerning Suicide Prevention
March 26, 2021

Dear Senator Mary Daugherty Abrams, Representative Jonathan Steinberg, and Members of the Public Health Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly,

My name is Marcia DuFore and I am a registered voter in the town of Suffield, Connecticut. I am testifying as Executive Director on behalf the Amplify, Inc., the Regional Behavioral Health Action Organization (RBHAO) for North Central Connecticut, member of the Connecticut Prevention Network (CPN), NAMI, and Keep the Promise Coalition (KTP).

I am testifying in opposition to HB 1085 An Act Concerning Suicide Prevention. This bill proposes to establish an Interagency Suicide Advisory Board that will be a state-wide, interagency coordinating source for suicide prevention. The bill also proposes that this Suicide Advisory Board be recognized in statute. The bill was likely proposed as an effort to create a state-supported infrastructure for enhancing our suicide prevention efforts. In fact, we already have such a structure, the current CT Suicide Advisory Board (CTSAB) with a well developed State Plan and the involvement of all the organizations listed in this bill and many more. The only missing element for the existing CTSAB is that it is not recognized in statute and not supported with state funds.

The Departments of Children and Families and Mental Health and Addiction Services, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, and the CTSAB Legislative Advocacy Committee are all vehemently opposed to this bill. Should this bill pass, it would be tremendously disruptive to the statewide suicide prevention infrastructure the CT Suicide Advisory Board (CTSAB) has spent over 10 years developing based on national evidence-based guidance with national technical assistance and training, and support from federal grants, and for which CT is now nationally recognized. Now, especially during COVID-19 pandemic with the impact on mental health and suicide ideation, is the time to reinforce and expand the existing infrastructure, not break it down and reinvent it without understanding the existing infrastructure and work of the CTSAB, its committees, and the diverse membership, and the prevention, intervention and response resources it all provides, despite the lack of dedicated funding from the state.

Again, the spirit of this bill, to support a state suicide advisory board, is welcome and laudable. We ask that you take the time to understand the existing structure and consider supporting it instead in order to help sustain the good work already being done.

We thank you for your thoughtful consideration and hope you consider our comments as you deliberate.

Sincerely,

Marcia DuFore