

Chairman Highland and Members of the Committee:

My name is Elaine Adair and I am here in support of the Jason Flatt Act/SB323 and on behalf of my son, Matthew Adair, my friend Martha Stevens and her son, Ian Atchison.

On November 15, 2010 I lost my oldest son, Matthew Scout Adair, to suicide. He was 21 years old. But I am one of the lucky ones....I got to see my son graduate high school, go to college and got a glimpse of the man he may have become. In my grief I have met other parents who have lost children to suicide- it is a group no one wants to belong to! One of those parents is Martha Stevens, who lost her son Ian Arthur Atchison to suicide on March 14 2007. I have Martha's permission to share their story today. Ian was 12 years old when he hung himself in his mother's bathroom. Ian was 12 years old when Martha cut him down and administered CPR. Ian was 12 years old when he was taken off of life support 4 days later. I thought my experience with my son was awful but I am heartbroken by Ian's experience and the fact that a 12 year old in 6<sup>th</sup> grade could have such dark thoughts and take his life. After his death, Martha was given a self portrait Ian had drawn in school that year... it showed him among the stars and Haley's Comet with something on his neck..did someone miss this as a warning sign? Did someone worry about this drawing but not have the skills or tools to know how to respond? Ian played soccer, baseball and basketball and loved fishing. The day after he hung himself, he was supposed to come to Topeka to be a page here at the Capitol. He was funny and smart and had a kind gentle heart. Ian had sleep and mental health issues. His mother took him to therapy and gave him the prescribed

medications. The other students made fun of him for going to therapy. Who else could have helped this sensitive little boy?

When my son died I vowed to do whatever I could for suicide awareness and prevention- by telling his story and advocating for awareness and training- so that other mothers may not have to suffer this painful grief. Senate Bill 323/the Jason Flatt Act would provide the school personnel, the people who sometimes spend the most time with our children, the skills and tools to make a difference, to potentially save a life.

Every child deserves to believe the world is a better place with them in it. Today I am here as the voice of my son Matthew, and for Ian....because as parents it is our responsibility to do everything we can to make the world a safer place for our children. Thank you.