



## House Education Committee

March 9, 2016

Presented by:  
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Executive Director

NAMI Kansas is the state organization of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, a grassroots organization whose members are individuals living with mental illnesses and their family members who provide care and support. NAMI Kansas provides programs of peer support and education by and for our members through a statewide network of local affiliates. We advocate for individuals who are living with mental illness to ensure their access to treatment and supportive services.

About one in ten children have a serious mental or emotional disorder.<sup>1</sup> An estimated 31,000 children live with serious mental health conditions.<sup>2</sup> Fewer than half of children with a diagnosable mental disorder receive any mental health services in a given year. The overall suicide rate in Kansas was higher than the national average each year from 2004-2013. Among children between 10 and 17 years of age, suicide is the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death.

We must and can take action to alleviate the loss of life among young Kansans due to suicide. We urge your support of Substitute for SB 323 which directs the State Board of Education to require all teachers and principals to receive a minimum of one hour of suicide prevention training. This is a very positive first step and puts the legislature on record in being pro-active to reduce deaths by suicide.

NAMI Kansas is launching programs to reach middle and high school students with information to de-stigmatize mental illness. We look forward to partnering with faculty and administrators who will be adding to their skill sets pursuant to the adoption and implementation of this legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to address these critical issues.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Mental Health Services, 1999, pp. 408-409, 411.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Public Health Service, Report of the Surgeon General's Conference on Children's Mental Health: A National Action Agenda, (Washington, DC: Department of Health and Human Services, 2000).