

Chairman Sen. Steve Abrams
Education Committee, Kansas Senate
Room 144-S, Kansas State Capitol
Topeka, Kansas 66612

January 23, 2016

Dear Sen. Abrams and Senators of the Education Committee,

I am writing to urge you to pass the Jason Flatt Act for Kansas. I think this kind of education is so important for school teachers, and my granddaughters are good examples of why.

October 7, 2014, the day my son Jesse committed suicide, the girls saw him hanging. We told the teachers and we told the school counselor. The counselor talked to them for a while and then quit. The teachers never talked to them about it or brought the subject up or even mentioned it to the rest the class so the class could be more sensitive about it.

Even though there was a kindergarten teacher that told about the little girl in kindergarten who lost her mom. Of course it wasn't suicide, but they brought it up.

While I worked at Sunflower Elementary School in Lawrence, I did not get any support from the other teachers and whenever I would bring up the subject of Jesse, just in general, not about the suicide, but just talk about him. It was like I had something wrong with me and they would ignore me. This was part of the reason why I lost my job. They felt my health wasn't OK.

My granddaughters needed attention from the teachers and counselor about the suicide but they did nothing.

The Legislature needs to do something about educating the teachers and counselors about suicide, for the sake of the children. I don't feel like our district, USD 497, is prepared to help children, or even high school kids, at all in a situation like that.

My oldest granddaughter was in high school and had been feeling very depressed afterwards. I mentioned it to one of the head personnel about so he would talk to the counselor to talk to my granddaughter, but nothing was ever done. Something needs to be done in educating children, even educating adults, about suicide.

Losing someone to suicide is a very hard time as it is, without having the support they need from others. It's difficult for adults, but can you imagine being a child and going through something you can hardly understand and wondering why. Like my granddaughter asked me if Jesse loved me so much then why did he leave us? I have asked myself that question many times. Imagine what it's like for a child.

Please pass the Jason Flatt Act for Kansas.

Sincerely,
Deb Peterson
Deb Peterson
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