

To : Chairperson Baumgardner and members of the Senate Committee on Education

From: Elaine Adair, parent of Matthew Adair

I am here today as an opponent of some parts of SB 333.

On 5/13/16 I witnessed Governor Brownback sign SB 323, the Jason Flatt Act, into law. I was proud of our state, our government and our community for coming together to take an important step to help provide training for suicide awareness and prevention. I had been one of the many parents/family members to provide testimony in support of this bill, having lost my son Matthew to suicide in 2010. We became a Village that day, recognizing it took everyone involved in our children's lives to do whatever we could to stop suicide. I also spoke on behalf of my friend, who lost her son Ian to suicide at the age of 12 in 2007. Ian had drawn pictures at school showing his suicidal feelings and the teachers and school staff did not have the training to recognize it.

I oppose the parts of SB333 that eliminate training for all school staff. I oppose the identification of staff to be trained based on the extent of the staff's interaction with students . I oppose the removal of the minimum of one hour of training.

What I was most proud of with the passing of the Jason Flatt Act was the amendment from THIS committee to expand the training to ALL school personnel. This was a very important recognition that it is not just teachers or counselors who are in a position to observe and help or intervene with our kids but every staff member. The feedback I have personally received from this aspect of the Act has been overwhelmingly positive, from parents to teachers to coaches. It is an

important recognition that the evening janitor, the lunch lady, the receptionist or the bus driver may be the one to notice a change in a student's behavior and with training, know how to respond to it. These are also the same staff members that students may be more comfortable talking to as they are not seen as being in a position of authority. This also goes beyond the school setting. Every single person who gets this training could potentially go out in the community and save a life.

I would also like to add at the same time this amendment was proposed, I was contacted by a junior at Seaman HS to consult on a presentation for her leadership class. Her presentation is to promote and increase suicide awareness and prevention in the school and among the students. The premise for her presentation is there is not enough discussion or training from the school. And that the adults, or school personnel, do not talk about suicide awareness enough. The students are taking it upon themselves to increase the conversation. What a powerful message.

Our suicide numbers are not decreasing, despite our best efforts. The statistics from Topeka Police Department for the number of suicide deaths from Jan to Jun of 2016 was 19 and from Jan to Jun 2017 was 19. From Jan to November 2017 the number of suicide deaths for people under the age of 19 was 9. And these are just the number from the Topeka Police Department. This is not the time to decrease training access to anyone. If anything we should be looking for ways to increase training.

The Jason Flatt Act had no fiscal effect on the state or school districts. The training material is available for free and online. The cost is one hour of an employee's time. This amendment is seeking to eliminate part of this, to potentially eliminate personnel who could be in a position to save a life. Our children need us to

remain a Village for them. Please do not allow these changes to the Jason Flatt Act to be passed.

Thank you.