

Good afternoon. My name is Jill Janes, I am thankful to be back in front of the committee today in support of House Bill 2676. You might recall my testimony last week in support of House Bill 2488 along with four young men, as well as a full room of support. As you know, House Bill 2488 carries similar themes as House Bill 2676 which brings me back into your presence once again.

Since standing before you only 7 days ago, clips of our testimonies from last week have been shared on social media, bringing over 1 million views collectively. The response in such a short period of time has been overwhelming, both in volume and emotion.

From these viewers, approximately 3000 comments have flooded into these threads in support of this adaptation to Kansas Law. My personal inbox has been overloaded with people sharing their own stories of loss related to suicide. In fact, it is through these postings one of the mothers testifying today learned of this hearing and brought her story to the table.

It's important for you to know that the number of Kansans in the threads who have been touched by suicide is heartbreaking. But the volume of these individuals who share that their loved one experienced coercion from others prior to their actions is shocking. I knew the issue was widespread, but it was eye opening to read comment after comment of people who each shared this common theme in their loved

one's story. The number one question I have received from these passionate supporters is, what can we do? How do we help?

I have encouraged them to write to you. Perhaps you have already received some of those letters. I predict you will continue to hear from people because...the word is out, thanks to these posts, this issue in Kansas is literally trending on TikTok, reaching people all over the country. While I was eager to share this update with you, I also wanted to follow up on a couple of issues I feel are important to understand as you enter into deeper discussions on this topic as a committee.

1. There have been some who have asked if we are just angry mothers looking for someone else to blame for our child's decision. My answer is, oh yes...we are angry, we are broken, we are devastated, we are like dead people walking around in a flesh suit and a hunder other descriptors that still aren't strong enough to depict our condition. But looking for someone to blame? No. We are not looking to unjustly place blame. Each of our children made certain decisions, and I think we accept and understand that. We also know and understand the signs we missed, the moments we didn't get it. We obsess over what could have been different. Trust me. We aren't looking for blame. We want solutions. We want the world to be better because of what our children

experienced. We want it to count. To make a difference. We want it to stop.

You see, when you have any problem, to seek improvement, you dissect the contributors to identify what can be done differently to get different outcomes next time. When it comes to suicide, there are many common contributors. As a society, we understand that proper resources, access to those resources, thorough education are all big contributors. But it's time we acknowledged that there is another contributor that is growing in popularity with the increase of technology in this digital age...coercion. Finding someone to blame doesn't bring our children back. We know that. This is about shutting down this consequence free access to destroy the vulnerable. If we don't speak up for them, who will? They are hurting so deeply, making them a target to those who treat their lives like it is a game.

2. The second thing I want to address is the opponents of this bill and of House Bill 2488 who are claiming that this is an infringement on free speech. I'm curious if your legislative researchers might be able to pull up the number of criminals who have been charged in 2023 for coercing vulnerable people out of money. These predators prey upon vulnerable people using technology, social media, digital communication...their words....to coerce people out of their money. And when this has happened over and over in the state of Kansas, has there ever been any lawyer or defense team that has

argued that they were exercising free speech as they led these vulnerable people to give up their money? I would suspect that the answer is no. It's well established that the state of Kansas sees this type of coercion as criminal CONDUCT.

I don't have to ask the legislative researchers to look up how many people in Kansas have been charged with criminal conduct for coercing people out of their lives. The answer is zero. Why is it that when a vulnerable person is coerced out of money, we all scream, "CRIME?" But when a vulnerable person is coerced out of their life, someone has the nerve to cry out "FREE SPEECH?" Really? What is the difference. Do we believe it is criminal to prey on the vulnerable to give up money is wrong and preying on the vulnerable to give up their lives is ok. The current law would suggest that this is what Kansas has to say on the issue.

House Bill 2676 and House Bill 2488 are seeking to criminalize criminal conduct, not words, not speech... coercive, predatory conduct. Anyone who is trying to spin the conversation down any other path is distracting this committee from one of the most urgent issues facing the State of Kansas at present. Sure there are lots of important issues the House will hear during the 2024 session, but this issue is literally an issue of life or death that demands a rapid response.

Not only do I urge the committee to join together, republican and democrat and everyone else in-between, to tackle the

overdue edits to Assisted Suicide Laws in Kansas, I urge you to do it as soon as legislatively possible.

I believe wholeheartedly that the news of such a change in law will spread quickly and there will be altered behavior that will yield the prevention outcomes we are seeking.

If for some reason, the committee elects to refrain from action on these changes, I assure you, the issue will resurface on your agenda again and again and again. Social media channels will continue to hum for change until the swell of the people is heard. Kansas is watching to see what you will do next.

I trust you will take our testimonies to heart and I want to express my gratitude Madame Chair to you and the entire committee for receiving the passion and pain we have shared with you today with a spirit of kindness and compassion.

Thank you.