



Testimony to Seniors, Families and Children Committee: 2/14/18

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Kevin Drollinger, and I am President and Executive Director of Provident. I'd like to spend two minutes amplifying the message from my colleague, and am here today to speak in favor of SB 846.

Provident has seen a huge increase in lifeline calls over the past year, and our track record is great in dealing with them. This is due in part to the fact that every person staffing our phones has at least 80 hours of training in suicide prevention. Unfortunately all too often we get calls from mental health professionals – social workers, behavior therapists, and other trained mental health professionals – asking for advice on how to deal with a client who is talking of suicide. If you had a friend or loved one reaching out to a mental health professional to deal with thoughts of suicide, wouldn't you want that professional – our mental health first responders - to have at least some training in dealing with it? I know I would.

This is what SB 846 accomplishes. It is clear and straightforward. For initial licensure, and for each two-year renewal, it requires licensed mental health professionals to have a minimum of two hours of training in suicide prevention. There is no fiscal note for this bill – the training is readily available for free or a very nominal cost and can be delivered throughout the state through the internet and webinars. A handful of states have enacted similar legislation, and this presents an opportunity for Missouri to be on the leading edge of impacting individuals in crisis.

Each of you has experienced death by suicide in your district. It's a bipartisan issue. Our media is flooded with it – just look to the recent Grammy awards where a song of the year nominee featured the Suicide Prevention Hotline (1-800-273-8255). Missouri now ranks 14th nationally in deaths by suicide – up from 17th just a few years ago. Suicides cost us more than \$1 billion in combined lifetime medical and work loss. In Missouri, death by suicide is twice as frequent as death by homicide. It's a huge problem and you can help lead the charge to address it. I urge you to support this legislation and do everything you can to expedite its review in the legislature. Thanks for your time and consideration.

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