Dear Representatives Beyer, Katko, and Napolitano,

The Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG)- a coalition of national organizations representing consumers, family members, mental health and addiction providers, advocates, and other stakeholders- is writing to express our strong support for the Barriers to Suicide Act of 2019 (H.R. 4309). This vital piece of legislation will create grants for state and local governments to fund nets and barriers on bridges to prevent deaths by suicide.

Suicide is a national public health crisis, affecting millions of Americans each year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported in June 2018 that life expectancy has decreased in the United States as the suicide rate has increased 30 percent over the past 20 years\(^1\). In 2017, over 47,000 Americans died by suicide making it the 10\(^{th}\) leading cause of death in the country and the 2\(^{nd}\) leading cause of death for ages 10-34\(^2\).

Bridge barriers save lives by giving suicidal individuals and those who care for them something they desperately need – time. This includes time to change their minds, time for someone to intervene, and time to seek help. Research consistently shows that the majority of those averted from a suicide attempt at a bridge do not go on to complete suicide elsewhere or with another method, and overall suicide deaths often decline throughout the surrounding area after bridge barriers are in place\(^3\).

The establishment of a competitive grant program for states and localities to apply for federal funding to install nets and barriers on bridges at high risk locations is an important step in our nation’s overall suicide prevention efforts. Moreover, the MHLG applauds the legislation’s inclusion of language calling on the U.S. Comptroller General to study the effectiveness of nets and barriers for structures other than bridges in preventing suicide.

The MHLG thanks you for your leadership and efforts to introduce this critical legislation that will help to prevent deaths by suicide.

Sincerely,
American Art Therapy Association
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Association of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry

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1 [https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/suicide/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/suicide/index.html)
3 [https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/saves-lives/](https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/saves-lives/)
American Dance Therapy Association  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
American Group Psychotherapy Association  
American Mental Health Counselors Association  
American Occupational Therapy Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychological Association  
Anxiety and Depression Association of America  
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare  
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW)  
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law  
Centerstone  
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder  
Clinical Social Work Association  
College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists (CPNP)  
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance  
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy and Action  
Emergency Nurses Association  
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice  
International OCD Foundation  
The Jewish Federations of North America  
Mental Health America (MHA)  
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)  
National Association for Rural Mental Health (NARMH)  
National Association of County Behavioral Health & Developmental Disability Directors (NACBHDD)  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Council for Behavioral Health  
National Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health  
National Register of Health Service Psychologists  
No Health without Mental Health  
Postpartum Support International  
Sandy Hook Promise  
School Social Work Association of America  
The Kennedy Forum  
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health  
The Trevor Project  
Trust for America’s Health