

Members of the State of Kansas House Judiciary Committee,

My older brother, Max Coleman, died by suicide on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at 21 years old. I was devastated to learn that the evening Max died, he was receiving harassing texts, urging him to end his life. The encouragement to follow through with self-harm was ongoing until Max finally, somberly replied that he would give in and follow through with suicide. The last text sent message on Max's phone, in response to this message, was a reply from this person saying, "GO FOR IT! No one cares." This was the last thing Max was ever told on this earth.

It pains me to think that Max may have believed this horrible lie. But, he shouldn't have, and I know he wouldn't have believed this lie had he been in a healthier state of mind. This was so far from the reality of the situation. Max was always popular and seemed to be the funniest guy in every room he entered. Max's enormous circle of support and friendship was on full display at his funeral with over 1000 people attending, either in person or virtually. How could this happen to someone with such a strong support system, with friends everywhere he went?

Max was struggling with depression brought on by the end of a romantic relationship. I've come to learn that the mind can become so incredibly vulnerable when in a state of depression, and I know that Max was in a desperate fight or flight mode. He was so desperate that these types of pressures, urges, and encouragement, played a major role in his mind's inability to arrive safely on the other side of these harmful thoughts. Max was determined to keep going, fight for healing, and hold on for better days. There was evidence he was fighting through his pain. He had set up a counseling appointment, he had started an online business he was excited about, and he had also set up a job interview with a company he was interested in joining. He was taking major steps to move forward and push through this temporary pain.

I know my brother, and I know he would have recovered in time, he would have grown through this and would be thriving in the next chapter of his life right now. But, he didn't get that chance. You see, there were two people who were aware of Max's vulnerable state of mind, they knew he was struggling with thoughts of self-harm, and made the decision to begin this harassing text conversation that ultimately cost Max his life. Max was doing his best to run from this darkness, but these individuals made sure to push him deeper and deeper into despair until they ultimately pushed him to death's door by urging him to kill himself, with constant reminders that no one cared about him.

Mind games like this must be criminalized or they will persist and the youth of Kansas will continue to perish. Preying on the weak should be a crime.

By passing House Bill 2488, we will send a message to all who hide behind screens that there is a cost to preying on the weak. In doing so, perhaps others in the future will stop themselves from taking similar actions, therefore saving lives.

We need your help, my generation is dying and this legislation is one step in the right direction.

Thank you,

Joshua Beaux Coleman