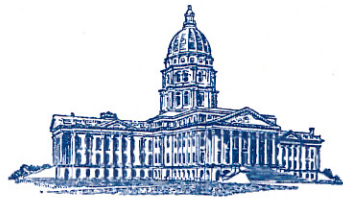


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February 7, 2018  
Testimony in Support of SB333

### **Senate Education Committee**

**Honorable Chair – Senator Molly Baumgardner**  
**Vice Chair – Senator John Doll**  
**Ranking Minority – Senator Anthony Hensley**  
**Honorable Committee Members**

Chairman Baumgardner; Members of the Senate Education Committee –

I'm Senator Lynn Rogers and speaking today in support of SB333. As a 17-year BOE member of Wichita Public Schools, I cannot begin to count the number of funerals I attended for students who took their own lives. Each event was heartbreaking. Each one was one too many. Suicide is a serious problem and one that all schools take seriously.

Wichita Public Schools invested many hours developing its current suicide training. Numerous professionals individually spent more than 40 hours putting together appropriate material, then trained staff to present to all 100 schools and non-educational sites. Over 7,000 employees attended the training: administrators, teachers, office staff, janitors, kitchen staff, plumbers, roofers, masons, auto mechanics, maintenance staff, truck drivers and more. Everyone employed by the district plays a role in the lives of our students. Everyone must know how to speak up and reach out. This is not an insignificant project. The hours invested in suicide prevention training totaled over 7,500 hours. Resources are available to all on the district website.

Depression is widespread among children and adults, and is the leading cause of all suicide attempts. Because of this, counselors and social workers are placed in every building, increasing the number of staff during the years of funding cuts to their school budget. Staff works closely with local mental health professionals to understand the issue of trauma and the long-term effect it has on students. We know that whatever difficulties adults are dealing with in our community, their children bring with them to school every day. Rising poverty levels in Kansas have brought rising despair.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for students aged 10-34. These statistics include elementary, middle and high school students, as well as those attending college. Unfortunately, the numbers grow every year all across Kansas. While the basics of intervention are the same, helping a struggling third grader is vastly different than coming to the aid of a high school senior. Assisting families with struggling third graders is very different than assisting families of a high school senior. Suicide prevention training must embrace those differences.

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The State Board of Education and local school boards need the freedom to decide how to best implement suicide prevention training. Training should be mandatory but managed locally. It cannot become an item that is merely something to check off of a to do list. The differing needs of communities and the long-term damage of trauma require that services need to be provided beyond the school. Training must include more than our staff. Schools must connect across their community in this endeavor. Training for all must be relevant, engaging and address current difficulties, specific to communities. Training for different employee positions must be customized to their positions.

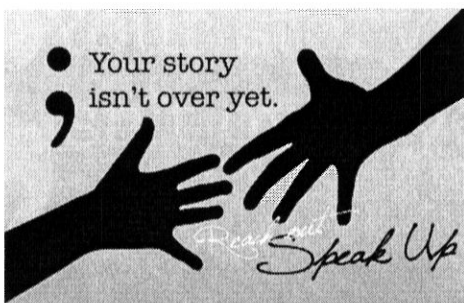
I am very pleased that the State Board of Education is investing time in the mental health needs of our students. Mental health is foundational to learning. SB333 and the work of the State Board of Education can increase awareness and provide effective methods of dealing with suicide.

Sincerely,



Lynn W. Rogers  
Senator - District 25

Bill text: <https://legiscan.com/KS/text/SB333/id/1702424>



Usd 259 resources: <https://www.usd259.org/Page/12437>