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Testimony; Senate Bill 333  
Senate Education Committee  
Feb. 8, 2018

Senator Baumgardner, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to express our support for Senate Bill 333.

Suicide is a critical problem and very often when you read of a suicide, people will say they never saw any sign that it was coming. This is because very few of us are really trained to see the warning signs.

Teachers, principals, and education support personnel spend a lot of time with young people - only their parents have more time. Just as we train teachers and principals to watch for signs of abuse and make them mandatory reporters of suspected abuse, it is proper to consider that school staff could notice some behavior or change in behavior that might be a warning sign of suicide.

We supported the passage of the Jason Flatt Act in 2016 and we continue to support the intent of this important legislation.

We do not believe the requirements of this Act are an excessive burden on the employee or the district. There is wide latitude on how such a training requirement could be met. We also know that some resources based on best practices are now available at no cost online. We also have no objection to the clear identification of the training program to be used and sharing that with others via the district's website.

Our only concern with the proposed amendments to the Act before you today is that there appears to be an attempt to limit training to only certain individuals. Frankly, we know that sometimes the custodian or another person with limited student contact might be the one person to whom a student might open up. I know that in the junior high school my children attended, the custodian was one of the most beloved staff members – it was he who dug through the lunchroom trash to find a mistakenly dumped retainer or helped a child with a spill. We believe that all school staff should be trained. One never knows exactly what person a child might confide in or what person might just overhear a conversation.

Finally, while training that meets the requirement of the bill is available at no cost now, there is no telling what might happen in the future. We ask that you ensure that the professional development in our schools is funded such that this is not an unfunded mandate.