

March 11, 2020

To: Senators Fields, Winter, Crowder, Ginal, and Smallwood,

From: Susan Marine, Chair of Advocacy, Suicide Prevention Coalition of Colorado (SPCC)

RE: Support for HB20-1086

While I intended to testify at the Health and Human Services Committee today, my plans changed because of new policies (related to the Corona virus) at the retirement community where I live. Therefore, I am relying on this written statement to ask you to support this important bill.

The Suicide Prevention Coalition of Colorado, as well as the Colorado Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), strongly support HB 1086 because, when implemented, **it will eventually decrease Colorado's high rate of suicide.** We know that that no individual piece of legislation or program can significantly lower the number of suicide deaths – each suicide is unique and is caused by a number of factors. However, we believe HB 1086 will help bring down the rate of suicide in the following ways:

- It will lead to **earlier diagnosis and treatment of mental health problems and suicidality.** By far the majority of those who die by suicide have an undiagnosed and untreated mental health problem. With earlier treatment, more serious and more expensive problems can be **prevented.**
- This bill should **improve access to mental services.** Nearly half of Colorado's adults with mental illness (407,000 persons) do not receive needed treatment, and 56% of youth with depression do not get treatment. Bill will help **remove cost as a barrier** to getting help by providing a yearly mental health evaluation – at no cost to patient. Furthermore, **HB 1086 will help individuals establish a relationship with a qualified mental health clinician to whom they can turn if/when needed.**
- Implementation of this bill will significantly **decrease the stigma associated with acknowledging you need help and seeking mental health services.** Over time, people going to have an annual physical exam will become accustomed to having a mental wellness exam.
- Last year you passed a new parity bill in Colorado, and there has been a Federal parity law in place for years. HB 1086 will help **increase parity between physical and mental health care.**

I hope you will vote for HB 1086 in Committee today. Thank you for taking the time to read this.