



Vermont Chapter

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February 17, 2016

Representative Patrick Brennan
House Transportation Committee
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Representative Brennan:

The American Academy of Pediatrics Vermont Chapter (AAPVT), is an organization committed to the physical and mental health of all children and adolescents. Our commitment includes the welfare of those who emerge from the purview of the AAPVT possessing the skills and determination to become healthy and productive adults.

The mental health needs of the population in general remain daunting in today's society. Adolescents and young adults struggle to maintain the momentum to contribute to society and to feel confident of success socially and professionally. Expectations can and should be high, yet failure to achieve looms ominously over the endeavors of many. In spite of efforts to develop a system where the ability to navigate this path has safeguards and support, mental health obstacles often stand in the way. Individual efforts to address these powerful impediments are frequently undermined by personal vulnerabilities and lack of societal supports.

Suicide is the second most common cause of premature and untimely death among adolescents and among adults between 20-30 years old, although it affects all age groups. While access to mental health treatment and supportive families are the cornerstones of suicide prevention, these reliable systems cannot always intervene prior to the decision to take one's life. This decision, coming at the darkest time in the life of an individual, can be impulsive at times and can often be disguised by those who have made an unfortunate irreversible choice.

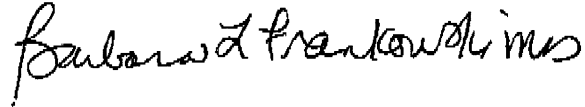
Prevention is obviously the only way to reduce the rate of death from suicide. While families and mental health professionals save many lives each year, access to the implements and settings, which make suicide possible, remain areas which need to be addressed to help reduce suicide.

The Queeche Gorge Bridge on Rte. 4 in Queeche is a well-known site in the state for suicide. Since 2002, there have been thirteen instances where victims jumped to their deaths, far more than any bridge in the state, accounting for 65% of the jumping suicides in the state. In addition to the suicide victims and their families, rescue personnel are at significant risk when they are in the process of body retrieval. Safety proposals have been brought before the legislature in the past, but failed to be implemented. H.593 has been introduced to the Committee on Transportation asking the legislature to put into place a suicide prevention structure and system at the

Queeche Gorge Bridge to save lives and spare families the agony of the preventable loss of loved ones.

The AAPVT Chapter supports this proposal and asks that the members of the legislature pass H.593 to in order to eliminate a setting for suicide which has continued to plague members of the Vermont community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Frankowski, MD, FAAP". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Barbara Frankowski, MD, FAAP
President