

**From:** Bell, Rebecca C.  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 14, 2023 5:09 PM  
**To:** Peninah Hodin  
**Subject:** H.230 Follow-up

Dear Members of House Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for inviting me to testify today on H.230.

I am writing to follow-up on the question from Rep Andriano regarding Youth Risk Behavior Survey results. In particular, how Vermont students answer questions relating to suicidal thoughts, plans, and attempts.

The easiest way to view the high school data is to view the graph of the individual questions and choose "United States" and "Vermont" separately in the drop-down menu. This shows a trend from 1999-2019.

For each of these questions, VT consistently has a lower rate of positive responses than the national average despite having higher suicide death rates.

Here are the direct links:

"High School students who felt sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 or more weeks in a row so that they stopped doing some usual activities, during the previous 12 months"

- [United States](#)
- [Vermont](#)

"High School students who made a plan about how they would attempt suicide in the previous 12 months"

- [United States](#)
- [Vermont](#)

"High School students who actually attempted suicide in the previous 12 months"

- [United States](#)
- [Vermont](#)

Although Vermont has robust participation in the Middle School YRBS, much of the U.S. does not. You can view VT middle school student responses to questions here and compare to the other states and school districts that do participate. Vermont responses in this age group are also lower than other areas.

Middle school students who considered suicide  
[2019](#) (can change year as needed)

Middle school students who made a plan  
[2019](#) (can change year as needed)

Middle School students who attempted suicide  
[2019](#) (can change year as needed)

I do want to underscore that Vermont pediatricians are deeply concerned about the levels of sadness/hopelessness and suicidal ideation, planning and attempts among young Vermonters and are working to address contributing factors. I draw attention to the fact that Vermont consistently scores lower on these areas compared to the national average in order to illustrate that these factors are not strong predictors of suicide death at either a population or an individual level. Impulsivity and access to firearms play a significant role in suicide deaths.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today and for your work to address suicide prevention in Vermont.

Sincerely,  
Becca Bell