

Eden White

Bill H7858

In favor of

We were barely 15 when my best friend's mom jumped off of the Mount Hope Bridge.

Barely 15 when her life was flipped upside down.

Barely 15 when her dad, who was rarely there, was forced to become a single dad of two kids and two dogs.

Barely 15 when she learned her mom had no will, and due to her parents divorce, no one was legally allowed to inherit the house.

Now she's 16, and motherless, evicted, and far from the town she grew up in with all of her friends in it.

Her mother was my my 3rd grade teacher.

I remember being in 3rd grade, feeling like I was the top of the world. Looking down at the little kindergarteners who looked like tiny ants in comparison to us. At 8 years old, I thought I was so old and mature. Now I'm twice that age, and I know I'm neither. And I don't WANT to grow up anymore. I probably look like a silly little kid, but I feel that I need to speak, because AGAIN, nothing has changed.

I was here last May, 7 months after the woman I knew, like a second mother, died by suicide.

I came here twice, to give a speech about why we need barriers on our bridges. And after I left that room the first time, after hearing the tears and pleas of so many people who had lost someone to suicide, I truly thought it was enough. I wasn't aware that Bridging the Gap and the Samaritans have been working for YEARS to get barriers up. I guess I was oblivious and naïve to think it was enough. That we were enough.

I was proud, I thought I could make a difference. Yet now I'm here again. And I'm willing to do this as many times as I have to.

You can say "I'm sorry for your loss" and other condolences. But words mean absolutely NOTHING if you're not physically doing anything.

Do you think I WANT to be here right now? I have math homework I should be doing. I should be practicing lines for the play I'm in. I could be trying different hair styles for my prom this weekend, like the other girls my age are doing, because we are 16. I am only 16 years old, and I don't think I could live with myself if I just sat here and did nothing while PEOPLE ARE DYING. Even if this bill doesn't impact you, it will impact thousands of lives, many who don't even know it yet.

TWO teachers from my elementary school died by suicide only a few months apart. These barriers could have been built years ago. If they had, maybe they'd still be here. We are wasting time. Wasting lives.

Who else has to die before this gets done?

This board has the opportunity to save so many lives by signing this bill. Is money truly worth more than the countless number of lives that could be saved?

I don't want to see this building ever again, but I will do whatever I have to do in order to get these barriers up. Don't be the reason I have to do this again. Please don't make me come back.