



Crisis Hotline: 401-272-4044 Toll Free: 800-365-4044 Business Line: 401-721-5220 Fax: 401-753-7938 www.samaritansri.org

47th Year of Service
1977-2024

April 18, 2024

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TO: The Honorable Senate and House Finance Committees and the
Senate Committee on Housing and Municipal Government

SUBJECT: Suicide Prevention Safety Barriers on our Bridges over Narragansett Bay

**In September 2023, I witnessed a suicide attempt
from the Sakonnet Bridge.**

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Directors of The Samaritans of RI in support of
Senator DiPalma's bill S2969 and the Representative Solomon's bill H7858.

After 23 years at helm of The Samaritans, my worst nightmare came true on September 29, 2023. In a terrible rainstorm, as I was driving over the Sakonnet Bridge, which links the towns of Tiverton and Portsmouth, a man was preparing to jump. The bridge railing was less than 3 feet. Too dangerous to stop, I, along with other drivers, called RI 911 and was connected to Portsmouth Police. The police were able to reach him in time and the man was saved. It was a day I shall never forget.

Helplessly watching this man prepare to jump from an unprotected bridge is the reason none of us have given up on the hopeless, alone, suicidal and the grieving. It is why we continue to recruit new generations of volunteers. It is the reason we continue to provide our volunteer staffed services for free.

It is the reason we continue to advocate for barriers.

Senseless, preventable deaths from our bridges over Narragansett Bay must end.

Please support 24S2969 and H7858.

Denise Panichas, Executive Director

One hundred percent (100%) of all charitable donations to The Samaritans of RI support our local, Rhode Island based charity.