



OHIO SUICIDE PREVENTION FOUNDATION

OHIO'S VOICE FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

November 28, 2023

The Honorable Haraz Ghanbari
Chairman, Ohio House Homeland Security Committee
77 S. High Street, 13th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Re: Support Letter and Proponent Testimony for House Bill 248

Dear Chairman Ghanbari,

On behalf of the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation (OSPF), I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for House Bill 248, the proposed legislation that would establish a new license plate dedicated to raising awareness for suicide prevention in Ohio. As the Executive Director of OSPF, I believe that this initiative will play a crucial role in promoting mental health awareness and supporting the important work of the Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation and our many partners throughout Ohio. Our mission is to work towards ensuring not one additional life is lost.

The staggering statistics related to suicide rates underscore the urgent need for comprehensive and proactive measures to address mental health issues in our state:

- Suicide impacts all communities across Ohio: in fact, our state loses 5 people a day to suicide.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for ages 10-24 and the leading cause of death for ages 10-14.
- Over 80% of Ohio's suicides are 35-65-year-old adults, and the highest rate of suicide lies with people over the age of 75.
- In July 2022, 988, the new National Suicide Crisis Lifeline went live across the state – on average Ohio is seeing an average of 10,000 calls, chats, and texts *a month* to 988.

OSPF has been working with the McClintock family from Tallmadge on introducing this license plate. In 2012, Debbie McClintock tragically lost her husband to suicide. Then, a few months later, her son, Logan, lost his life to suicide. By introducing a specialized license plate, we have the opportunity to bring attention to this critical issue on a daily basis, fostering public discourse and reducing the stigma associated with mental health challenges. We hope no situation like the McClintock family has faced will ever happen to another Ohio family.

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The funds generated from the sale of these license plates will be directed towards the efforts of OSPF. Our organization has consistently demonstrated its commitment to suicide prevention through education, advocacy, and support services. The financial resources generated from the license plates will undoubtedly enhance our capacity to implement and expand life-saving programs. We are proud to partner with the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, as well as dozens of non-profit organizations around the state to achieve our goals.

In addition to the financial support, the visibility of suicide prevention license plates on our roads will serve as a constant reminder of the importance of mental health and the need for compassion and understanding. This initiative aligns with the broader effort to create a more supportive environment for individuals struggling with mental health issues, encouraging open conversations and promoting resources for those in need.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your continued dedication to the well-being of our community. Thank you also to Representatives Demetriou and Manchester for their commitment to this effort, as well as the many other members of the Ohio House who have expressed a willingness to be supportive of House Bill 248 and the other mental health programs and funding authorized by the Legislature.

This will have the potential to make a significant impact on the mental well-being of our community members. By approving the establishment of suicide prevention license plates in Ohio, we can collectively contribute to breaking down the barriers surrounding mental health, fostering a culture of empathy, and ultimately saving lives.

Sincerely,



Tony Coder
Executive Director
Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation

Cc: Members of the Ohio House Homeland Security Committee