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May 14, 2003

Members of the Assembly Committee on Education,

I am writing today to ask for your support of SB 36. As you may know, Nevada has, and has had for as long as I can find, an incredibly high rate of suicide. We've given ignoring-the-problem "the old" college try," and it clearly is not working for us. Preventing suicide requires a community-wide response, which is why I am so proud to see our legislature making the strides it has in recent sessions.

SB 36 is a bill that is hard to find objectionable. It makes training available to school teachers and administrators; it does not involve outreach to the students. It does not create a duty or a responsibility; it provides an opportunity. A recent study University of Nevada study found that 10% of Nevada youth admit to having made a suicide attempt. Additionally, the American Association for Suicidology estimates that for every one teen that dies by suicide, there will have been 100-200 teens who will have made attempts. Our schools are already facing this issue; the question is whether we are going to give them access to the tools they need to face it effectively.

Suicide has an enormous emotional and financial toll on our state, and education is the key to breaking this shameful legacy for future generations. Suicide prevention is not an innate skill; it is something we have to learn. There are pervasive misunderstandings about the character of one who might die by suicide... that they do not talk about it beforehand, that people who have loving friends and family are immune, that girls are more likely to complete suicide, that it does not happen to smart people or popular people. I often hear, "Oh, but he's really artistic," or "She's okay, she has lots of good friends." These are easy mistakes to make if you don't know better, which is why training is so important.

Growing up can be a painful process, and we do not always turn to our parents when we are in trouble... even when they are the best parents in the world. I know that many of you on this committee have children of your own. When you go home to those children, I want you to look at them. I want you to look them in the eyes and think about what kind of training you want to be available to the faculty at their schools. Preventing suicide is not one person's responsibility; it is something we have to do together.

In closing, I ask that you give your full support to SB 36 and I thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Stacy Heiser  
Crisis Lines Coordinator



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**Suicide Prevention Hotline of Nevada**  
**877-885-HOPE (4673)**

www.crisiscallcenter.org

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SUBMITTED BY: STACY HEISER