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February 26, 2003

The Honorable Ann O'Connell
Nevada State Senate
Carson City, NV

Dear Senator O'Connell

I wanted to provide some input on S.C.R. 3, 4 and 5 dealing with the issue of suicide. Unfortunately, the hearing is set for Friday, March 7 and I will have to be back in Las Vegas that day for an appointment I am not able to re-schedule.

As we have discussed, I have lots of personal experience with suicide. Both my father and my brother committed suicide. We have often called it a family curse because it seems to occur regularly among uncles, aunts, and cousins. While this tendency may not necessarily be genetic, it does appear to stem from depression which likely is genetic.

The stigma for family members who experience this awful tragedy is very difficult. It is not a situation that can be discussed easily because it is so misunderstood. Family members suffer from guilt for many years following the death of their loved ones. We try to find some reason and often feel that there were signs we should have recognized and some action we should have taken. We can never answer to our satisfaction the question, "Why?". My brother's children, who were aged 7 through 11 at the time of their father's death, have been severely impacted and have all struggled with alcoholism and depression. They will never recover from the loss of their father in such a devastating manner.

My most recent experience with the depression that often precedes suicide occurred with my teenaged granddaughter, Megan, following the loss of her friend to suicide. I am attaching a note which my daughter prepared regarding how the sensitivity of her orchestra teacher was instrumental in helping Megan and others of her class recover.

I am encouraged that you have taken the steps necessary to open a dialogue and I am available to help in any way I can. Education seems to be the key and if we can ensure there are more teachers and other professionals who are able to recognize the signs, we may be able to lessen the occurrence of this tragedy. Please feel free to use any of this information in any way that you feel will be beneficial.

Sincerely,


Margaret McMillan

Information regarding Carl Reinarz:

Carl Reinarz is the Orchestra Teacher at Cimarron Memorial High School, 2301 N. Tenaya Way, Las Vegas, NV 89128, (702) 799-4400. My daughter, Megan, had him for a teacher throughout her entire high school career. He was always an enthusiastic teacher and related extremely well with his students. They not only learned the usual school orchestra music, but he kept it interesting by teaching them to play Metallica's Unforgiven. Music adds so much to a student's overall education experience and Mr. Reinarz's contribution to that experience shows his dedication to the youth of Las Vegas.

However, Mr. Reinarz went much further in his dedication to his students. When Megan was a Junior, one of her very close friends committed suicide. It was devastating to Megan and her friends and it became very difficult for her to cope with school. Impressively, all of her teachers picked up on her change in personality and took the time to discuss what was going on with her (a nice comment on Clark County teachers).

A very short time later, another teenage boy in Texas committed suicide while repeatedly listening to the Blink 182 song "Adam's Song" which is written from the perspective of someone who has committed suicide. Mr. Reinarz wanted to take this opportunity to allow the students to discuss their feelings about suicide and whether or not music played a role. Being sensitive to Megan's very personal situation with this subject, he discussed it with her first, and she agreed it was a good idea.

What resulted was a very open and honest discussion between these students on a topic that is so devastating to so many and is so often not discussed or understood. That discussion was a major turning point in Megan's recovery.

Mr. Reinarz is not only an outstanding and dedicated teacher, but a dedicated friend to those students who are lucky enough to have him. The sharing of his knowledge of music and the extra time he takes to know his students personally by being aware of what's going on in their lives certainly added to the quality of their lives.