

To whom it concerns,

I'm a mother who lost her son, Nick Bales to suicide on September 29, 2018. Nick was a senior at Arapahoe High School. Nick has suffered from anxiety and depression since the 6th grade and has been getting therapy ever since he was diagnosed.

I can't say it loud enough or clear enough that something needs to change in our system regarding mental health illness. Our kids are killing themselves. What's it going to take? Ever since we lost our son Nick, I have been advocating for mental health. From first-hand experience, I receive about 3-4 calls from kids and or parents weekly desperate for help. Society needs to be educated on this crisis. We can't wait anymore for something to be done! How many more lives have to be lost before something changes!!!! These are our kids!!!

I feel that implementing mental health awareness and educating our youth and removing the stigma should absolutely without a doubt be implemented in health classes starting as young as the 6th grade.

It is imperative that we remove the stigma and shame around mental illness! It is a disease that needs to be treated the same as heart disease, cancer, kidney disease, diabetes etc.

Please, I beg you as a mother who cries every day at the loss of her son to pass this bill!!! Let's not have anyone else feel like this is their only option!!

Sincerely,

Maria and Will Bales

1/20/19

Dear Colorado State Representatives,

I am a student at Colorado Mountain College and heard about the proposal for a bill to lower the age at which a person can seek therapy without parental consent. From my personal experience this bill would have been beneficial to me as a young girl. When I was about thirteen years old, I was starting to question why I was so different from other girls in my grade. I knew I was a tomboy, but I also didn't have the feelings my girlfriends said they had for boys our age. In fact, my friend's description of her feelings for her boy crush matched my feelings for his sister. I kept that a secret of course. I grew up in Eagle when homosexuality was not talked about at all. I barely knew what it meant. The most I knew about it was that it wasn't normal, and that the bible

said it was wrong. I felt guilty, lost and lonely. Luckily, I made a friend who visited her dad here each summer from California who was the first person I came out to. She told me that more of people like me did in fact exist and that it wasn't wrong or a big deal. Unfortunately, she was the only person who knew and didn't care but lived a thousand miles away and only saw a few months out of the year. I had no one else to talk to because I was afraid of losing friends, being judged and teased and most of all, disappointing my parents.

Middle School through High School were a very challenging time. I felt depressed, hopeless, and unseen for years. I wrote a lot of dark poetry as an outlet but because I couldn't control the mental and emotional pain I was experiencing, I often thought about suicide. I resorted to cutting instead. The physical pain was pain I could control. When I finally did come out in high school, it was not by my peers I was bullied, but by teachers. I received shame and punishment from a number my teachers. I recall having to be very careful about when I was holding girlfriend's hand in the hallway. One teacher specifically would call us out and said PDA wasn't allowed. If you looked around, it was clear that each straight couple was free to display affection as they pleased. Another horrific memory was when my principal called my home to report that he thought I was a sexual predator. His idea of me was skewed by his homophobia. My father replied that he knew what a sexual predator looked like from years working at the sheriff's office and that I wasn't one.

If I had the opportunity to talk to a professional early on, I would have been more prepared for the emotional, mental and social obstacles that were to come my way in life. I wouldn't have had to go through adolescents being weighed down by guilt, believing there was something wrong with me. I think I would have better self-confidence, would have done better in school, avoided depression and self-harm and could have had the means to stand up to adults who were discriminating against me. If teachers were better trained in and students were taught about mental health, I believe there would be fewer instances like mine which would resort in fewer suicides also. Please consider this proposal to help benefit young people to ensure and guide their happier future.

Thank you,

Mia Beyer

I lost my mom to suicide when I was 13, she was a struggling alcoholic who was depressed and alone. Her suicide led my brother into a deep depression throughout his teen life. I watched him struggle with anxiety and depression, go to counseling, and take medication. Mental illness is an

illness. It can be caused by genetics or events with trauma. Having both in our history, it leads to him attempting to take his own life two times. I struggled to watch my own brother go through such a terrible thing, and I was too young and confused to understand. There were times I told “just get over it” “choose to be happy, it’s not that hard”. Growing up I met more and more people with mental illness, one of my boyfriends struggled with depression. I watched him spiral in his mind, go to such dark scary places. Mental illness, is nothing of a choice, talking about it, IS! It is so important to talk about things, I think if my ex-boyfriend had opened up more, if no one shut him down when he brought up his feelings, he would still be alive. In the past 3 years, my community has witnessed over 10 suicides amongst teenagers. It’s not a joke, it’s an illness and it needs to be made known. I wish someone explained to me how the chemicals in your brain could trick you, I didn’t understand until it happened to me, my first semester of college I became very depressed and anxious. I truly struggled to talk to people and make friends at first. When I made the realization that my feelings may be deeper than I knew, I searched for resources. Luckily, I was surrounded by people and places I could easily find help. When you talk about it, it gets better. If I could preach one thing every day, it would be that mental health needs awareness. ~ Chloe Ghram

I, Finn Mott, support the bill proposed by Project We Care Colorado in lowering the consent for treatment age from 15 to 12, education and advocating for mental health, and making resources available and affordable for everyone in need. This organization is completely teen led, and based of personal experience. I believe in this bill because of the significance mental illness has had on my life. I was diagnosed with brain and spinal cancer in 2016. This sent me spiraling into depression, and I have a chemical deficiency in hydrocortisone that makes me extremely anxious and stressed all the time. I have no control over my stress. This has led to mental breakdowns, and more depression. Going back to school I was not seen as Finn Mott but as solely that cancer kid. I did not have an identity. Nobody wanted to talk to me, and nobody understood me. I was sad that I was not the person I used to be and I felt isolated and alone. I also have many parenting issues that take a huge toll on my life. My dad always has this unreachable standard that I can never reach, and only tells me what I am doing wrong. I strive to do my best in school to please my dad. I just want that one nice job at the end of the year. So whenever I get a bad grade I feel horrible about myself. This has caused me to feel constantly bad about myself, and my life. I feel unworthy and unloved. My dad’s fiance is also abuses me verbally. If I say anything in defense I am the one in trouble. My dad does not support me yet his fiance. I feel rejected and unbelonging to my family. My mom’s husband has a drinking and anger problem. He similarly abuses my mom with words, and is altogether inconsiderate. This

hurts me as it hurts my mom. All of the above have thrown my mental health in all directions. I needed treatment for the tumors in my brain and my mental health when I was 12. I still struggle to be happier, but I have received a great amount of help through Mind Springs in Eagle CO. The therapist helped me look at life from a more positive perspective. Without my therapist I would not nearly be in a positive mental state as I am today. I beg to please consider this bill as it will help so many children in so many different situations.

As organizer of TEDxVail for the past decade, I've heard dozens of personal stories particularly by teens about suicide attempts, self-harm, drug overdosing, feeling isolated, and misunderstood, toxic friends and relationships, grades, life paths, meaning of so many confusing thoughts, adjusting to divorce, grandparents dying, defining their sexuality, incest, autism stigma, clique exclusions, bipolar dosing, life-threatening disease and how to cope, parents not believing serious issues, and mental challenges. TEDxVail volunteers have produced dozens of TEDxYouth@Vail Talks by youth on these and other subjects that address teen angst and their place fitting-in in a culture which often has little time or regard for their calls for help. These Talks offer solutions to these as seen by the youth themselves. Their calls to action are designed to move youth to save themselves. Some of these can be found [here](#). Several of our current speakers are part of Project We Care Colorado, a completely teen-led and teen-oriented statewide mental health organization for decreasing stigma, educating and advocating for mental health, and making resources available and affordable for everyone in need. They want more than talk. They want more professional help. They are calling for SBXXX to pass. I am full-heartedly in favor of their call for greater access to mental health support for youth. The proposed mental health bill lowering the age of consent to 12 and provided for many more resources for the mental well-being of youth is much needed and welcome use of my tax dollars. While four counselors at one of our two main high schools are necessary, this level of mental health support is wholly insufficient for this crisis. Colorado is ranked 9th nationally for child suicides. Our Attorney General's office is partnered with the pediatric experts and government agencies, spending millions to inspire change. Our teens need more. They need legislation to support their surviving thoughts and attempts at suicide. They need professional, affordable counseling. They need anonymity in asking for help during their crises. Vail Valley is reeling from tragic youth suicides. This spring a 13-year-old shot

herself in the head with a gun from her own home. Imagine the horror and trauma suffered by other students/teachers/administrators, her family, and our community. My own autistic 14-year-old grandson was bullied for many years by this girl, I discovered after she killed herself. Intervening mental health might have staved off this little girl's ongoing mental emergency.

Thank you for considering positively this critical bill for our teens' mental wellness.

Kat Haber

TEDxVail Organizer & Vail Valley resident & beautiful idea amplifier , business owner & skier & soon-to-be great grandmother

A new bill that makes the age of confidentiality 12 years old, will drastically help our society. First, it will help kids feel safe and actually could get them major help. I remember the first time I went to a psychologist, she said, "First thing I do want to mention is that since you are not fifteen yet, I must tell everything to your mom under her request." I then was having doubts because this was no different than just talking to my mom, even though I needed professionals to help. It wasn't that I was doing anything harmful, it was just that I was trying to find out who I was. The main problem with giving kids no privacy in what they say is that after such a long time it builds up and keeps building until they can't handle it. I agree that if a kid is harming themselves or others that their parents should know just to give them help but for minor things, it is not necessary.

If a parent is secretly abusive, then when this privacy is told to them, we may be treading in some dangerous water. I personally know many kids whose parents would punish them for even being a part of the LGBT community. Another example is if the kid told their counselor that their dad goes and gets drunk every weekend at the bar, then comes home and acts violently against his wife and children, then we turn what could be a life-saving situation, into an even deeper hole that we are digging ourselves. Now imagine a 13-year-old tells their counselor this when the bill passes, it could save them from a lot of trauma.

Finally, if a kid, let's name them Violet, had one very homophobic parent and one that wasn't but they were divorced, and then Violet had to go to therapy because one of her parents found out that she was self-harming. The therapist is very nice and Violet eventually tells him that the reason she was self-harming was that she was part of the LGBT community and was constantly being made fun of and called homophobic slurs. Of course, they talk through it and at the end, Violet feels a lot better about almost everything that had happened. Then, her

homophobic parent asked for what she had said in detail. The therapist has no other choice but to tell them and then later, that parent kicked her out of their home for this reason. She then has to go live with her other parent even though they work a very long schedule. At this point, it is pretty safe to say that Violet is feeling worse than ever. This is why it is important to give kids ages 12 and up confidentiality. Without it, they may be more prone to harm themselves, others, or even their parents or others, harm them.

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"One day it got so bad that I found myself taking off my belt and trying to hang myself in the school
bathroom"

It's soft
Deep black clouding your mind
It comes on slow
Then wrapping you with its claws
It's a storm
Waiting to strike
Then throwing you off the charred cliffside
Into muted waters that fill your ears
Then you start to realize
As you're drowning
There are others in the water
But they're breathing fine

We are held together by floss
Sewn together at the seams
Paint on our lips
Hiding our stuffing
That was forced down our throats
By society
By our parents
We move jerkily
Controlled by the marionette strings
Tied around our limbs
We are dolls
Beautiful
Broken
Cracked little dolls

My veins are string
My blood is bleach
My heart is cold
My arms can't reach
And as I look in the mirror
I smile with rotten teeth
Feeling no fear
My stick-thin frame

Is decked with scars
Every bone sticks from my skin
Cuts so thick they look like bars
Goodbye cruel world
Maybe now I'll be happy

I fall and I get up
Then I trip
And fall even harder
I get up again
And this time
My wrists snap
I cry but get up
Only to fall
Again and again
Until
Finally
It's my neck that breaks
A sweet release
From all the pain

You can give up
Or you can keep going
There's always the choice
Just one cut - there's no harm
One swig - then I'm done
24 hours - zero calories
I won't do it again
No motivation
Head down and keep going forward
I want to fall
More than you know
I want to give up
And yet I cling to the ledge
Holding on
Waiting for the strength
To pull me up
Or
For someone to pull me up with them

All I see is dark
I've lost my sense of light
What I know is wrong
I do not know what's right
I've been traveling down a broken path
And now I'm faced with unbridled wrath
I am beyond weak
And the numb I contain has reached its peak
I am unsure of where it leads
But my one request is to bleed

Give up now
There's no point
Nothing you'll ever be great at
And there's optimism
Pink
And shiny
And bouncing
Never quite silenced
It should go fuck itself
Optimism
I want to die
Go upstairs and
Drown my sorrows
With a can
And bottle
And blade
Drown the lonely
The failure
Disappointment
I don't want to live
But I can't even get up
So my plans are put on pause

Submission
Acceptance
Anger
From me, you will get
A girl

Who makes herself small
Who wants to die
Who doesn't know
Who can't do anything
Who wears bracelets
Just in case
She relapses
A girl
Who is desperate
Unsure
Unmotivated
Confused
Scared
Numb
Alone

I wish I was better. I wish I was okay. I don't think I ever will be again.

What the actual fuck are you doing. Mother fucking study instead of wasting paper and ink on pointless words. I don't care if you can't retain the information, I don't care that you feel like shit or can't focus. You have to study. You're not a procrastinator or a failure, that's not who you are but its who you've become. Isn't that sad? Remember how you would come home from school, study, then plan for which college you would go to? What happened to that? Stop watching cars and opportunities pass by and overcome the anxiety. You need to mother fucking study.

I used to hear the voice
Hear it tell me my flaws
Now I don't
Because it's become my voice
That's sad
But its normal
I used to hear the voices in my head
Now they're frozen
Numb
Dead

Happy is my default
And nobody can tell the smile is forced

Because when all else fails
When I am shattered
There will still be a smile on my face
So nobody will see the ruins

Sleep clouds her eyes
But she can't help to think
About the boy, the ghost of her innocence
Always a boy
Always a love interest
Never alone
Because when she's alone
Her demons catch her
Taunt her
Throw her in the air
And drop her
Sleep clouds her eyes
And instead
She plans
How it would feel
To wake up
Dead

If I pretend
Truly pretend
That I am fine
Maybe it will be
If I ignore it,
Like I've been advised to
Like I've been warned to
If I walk
Like it doesn't hurt
If I think
Like the dark isn't there

It started with pens
Markers
Pencils
I never thought

The lines drawn on my skin
Would be made
By a blade

The knife you held still rips me to shreds

I look at the old me
Smiling with you
I remember the innocence
And remember blocking everything out
I look at the thing I loved, you
All I see is a pained smile on a terrified girl being hugged by a monster

You put your hands right here, and I will never forget the bruises

Here lies innocence - ripped from the hands of the unsuspecting

What would happen if everybody saw themselves the way others saw them. What if we already do?

#metoo
1 hashtag
2 words
Billions of stories
My story among them
#metoo
It's breaking silence
Murdering stigma
Shattering pain
#metoo
Nights of wondering
Of screaming
Of tears
Of "just give me a minute"
Of "I'm almost done baby"
#metoo
Rape culture plagues our streets
Suffocating society
Violence has become all too normal

#metoo
I can't believe this shit still goes on
#metoo
One day
One day
I hope that this will end
#metoo

Music is a decent outlet but it can only do so much. People who hear about your issues, most people get mad at you because they think you're faking it. It's a thing of isolation, you feel so alone because nobody wants to talk to you about it, and you feel like there's no out, like its always going to be there. I have to fake happy my way through every day, I have to pretend. And the feeling like you're never going to be able to get help makes everything worse. Nobody wants to talk, people don't get it, they think I'm trying to get attention. If I go to the counselors they're going to call my parents. When I told my parents that i had tried to kill myself multiple times, they screamed at me. And told me that it was so hard on them to know that their own kid is faking it. There's no place for me to get help without my parents knowing. So I feel stuck. The only out I have is alcohol and drugs which I know are bad, but I feel like there's nothing else I can do to make myself feel better. I've got two friends who will actually listen to my issues, but they don't know how to help, they can't help, they're just teens, not professionals. But I can't get the help I need because my parents need to be involved. At school, I went to the counselors seeking help, and I wish I hadn't, because it made everything worse at home. Every. Time. I want to live in a place where I can get help that's accessible, all I've ever wanted is to get help, and I hope that me sharing my story will push you to make a change.

You want to know what happens? I'll be fine, and then I'll go numb. I feel like shit, because nothing feels like the end of the world. And when I feel nothing, all I want to do is feel something. And that happens by cutting, or something extreme. We live in a small hunting town, where we leave guns lying around the house and give our children knives for their birthdays, a thoughtless gift, that can fuck people up. When my friends get together, we don't laugh and gossip, no we sit and talk about what we're going to do when we have our motivation back. We compare rape stories, suicide attempts, the time we've spent in mental institutions and scars that deck our wrists and hips and thighs. We'll cry over each other, begging the other to just get help. Then we'll smile. How? We'll ask, because there's nowhere for me to go. This has gone on for long enough, so I'm standing up here saying that this needs to change. You, you need to change this because if you don't your kids are going to keep killing themselves.