

FOREFRONT'S SUICIDE PREVENTION LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES 2019-21

Many suicides are preventable. Washington's suicide rate is 11 percent higher than the national average. In 2017 alone, there were 1,292 deaths including, 255 veterans, 87 young people under 19, and approximately, 7,782 new survivors of suicide loss negatively impacted by this complex form of trauma and experience major life disruption. 1648 This public health emergency requires immediate public and private investment to fuel upgrades to our systems, innovation and widespread dissemination of evidence informed community-based programs. Washington's legislature can continue its national leadership on this issue in the 2019 session.

Governor's Budget contains essential investments including funding for: 1) expansion of services to individuals in suicides crisis provided by WA state crisis lines partnering with the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline; 2) implementation of the [Bree Collaborative Suicide Care Report and Recommendations](#) aimed at improving the care of individuals in suicide crisis in health care; 3) nine regional behavioral health navigators to help connect K-12 students to care, and to support schools in crisis response planning.

Strengthen School-Based Suicide Prevention Efforts | [HB 1221](#): Building on HB 1336 (passed in 2013), this bill would use public/private funding to bring comprehensive suicide prevention planning and programming to schools, including mandated reporting to parents/guardians when concern exist about a student suicide risk.

Expand the Safer Homes, Suicide Aware Program | [HB 1648](#): The Safer Homes, Suicide Aware program launched in 2017 with strong bipartisan support and a public-private funding model. This bill would expand the Safer Homes, Suicide Aware program to support more veterans, law enforcement and workplaces pairing effective suicide prevention strategies with the distribution of free locking devices for medications and firearms.

Increase the Number of Mental Health Professionals Qualified to Treat Suicidal Individuals: This bill provides funding to forgive student loans and provide conditional scholarships for mental health professionals who are educated in rigorous suicide-prevention treatment and who agree to work for public mental health agencies.

Increase the Number of Mental Health Counselors on Higher Education Campuses to assist Student Veterans | [SB 5428](#), [HB 1355](#): These bills provide funding to add dedicated mental health counselors to serve veterans at the public 4 year institutions and seeks to significantly improve the student-to-counselor ration on community and technical campuses.