

Senator Lymann Hoffman  
Senate Finance Committee

In support of SB42

Kennith Holbrook  
4-16-2024

Dear members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Kennith Holbrook, and I live in Wasilla, Alaska. I am the parent of 2 students at Machtetanz Elementary in the Mat-Su Borough School District. In August I will have 3 students in our school district. I am writing to you today in support of SB41: "An Act relating to mental health education".

I am in support of this bill, because I have spent the past 13 years working in the education and mental health fields and have witnessed first-hand the importance of mental health education. Mental health education is also important to me because I have had a lot of close friends and family members who have either experienced a mental health crisis or who have dealt with chronic mental health issues. There are plenty of documents attached to this bill that highlight supporting data. What I would like to do is share a personal story that illustrates why this bill is so important.

My cousin is a born and raised Alaskan man. He is also a combat veteran who suffered from PTSD after returning from the war in Iraq. When he retired from the Army, he had no idea how to deal with the trauma of war. He turned to alcohol and substances to cope and became a horrible addict. Long-story short, he eventually got better because the military forced him to go to substance abuse treatment and therapy. This is a decision he would never have made on his own, because mental health was barely talked about when we were in school and there was a ton of stigma around mental health when we were young. If my cousin had been given mental health education in school, maybe he would not have had to hit rock bottom to get his life in order.

I want my children and their peers to grow up in an environment where mental health and mental wellness are openly discussed. I want students educated on the warning signs of suicide, self-harm, mental health crisis, and where to go for help and support. I believe this education will save lives and in the long run save the public money by raising healthy young adults who contribute to society rather than drain our resources.

I strongly support SB41 and the positive impact it will have on our state if passed. Thank you for your time and effort in support of Alaska's students.

Kennith Holbrook  
kennithholbrook@hotmail.com  
907-687-0776