

Kansas Corrections Committee,

Good morning. My name is Jill Janes. On April 14, 2023 I entered my 21 year old son, Max Coleman's apartment in Wichita to find him deceased from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. I did chest compressions until first responders arrived. My son was declared deceased at the scene. The trauma of that day will forever haunt me. My life will forever be divided by this date. My life before Max's death and my life after Max's death. There is no pain like that of losing a child, especially from a death that simply didn't have to be.

The circumstances around my son's death are all too common among the youth of Kansas. He was suffering from depression which had been magnified by a recent breakup with his girlfriend. I currently reside in Texas, although Kansas was my home for many years. Max called me on the evening of April 13<sup>th</sup> explaining that the depths of his depression were at an all-time low. I responded as any mother would, although it was 11pm and my other minor children had school the next day, I woke them up and we drove through the night to get to him.

Max was suicidal and had openly expressed his despair. However, he was taking strides to recover and move forward. The day before he died he set up a job interview that he was excited about. He had also set up a counseling appointment on Monday after working tirelessly all week to get through the very long waitlists with Wichita counseling offices. Less than a month prior to his death he had purchased a new laptop and had launched an online business.

While he was deeply struggling, he was also very clear with me that he was hanging on and looking forward to my company. He called me around 1:18am to see how much longer it would be until I arrived. I told him I'd pull into town around 6am. He assured me repeatedly that he was hanging on and was just eager to see me. At the close of our call, we agreed that he should try to get some sleep so the time would pass easier and I'd wake him once I arrived at the apartment. He told me he was indeed sleepy and was going to put down his phone and get some rest.

However, before he could get to sleep, less than 30 minutes after we hung up, he began to get text messages, unprovoked, from a number he did not know.

The person on the other end was telling Max that he was now dating his former girlfriend and proceeded to deliver a multitude of insults. Max initially replied to the unknown person, almost like a warning to back off, that he was seriously struggling with suicidal thinking, giving the person the insight to reroute their actions and rethink their comments. Instead, the person took the opportunity to encourage Max to follow through, "GO FOR IT! DO IT! NOBODY CARES ABOUT YOU!" Similar messages persisted until Max finally replied with a somber message confirming that he would be following through to which the person replied again, "DO IT!!! NO ONE CARES!" These were the last words communicated to my son on this earth.

I believe that my son would still be here today if he hadn't encountered this type of urging and encouragement in his vulnerable condition.

You see, suicidal people are looking for reasons to stay, and they are looking for reasons to go. The conversations Max was having with me, his dad, and his siblings were giving him just enough encouragement to stay. But these messages...that was all it took to snip the impossibly thin thread he was hanging by emotionally/mentally.

After the police concluded their investigation there two shocking revelations.

1. It was revealed that the person behind the text messages was a girl living in Manhattan, Kansas acting in partnership with the ex-girlfriend. The pair schemed together, knowing fully of Max's suicidal condition, to send these messages. There is significant proof that they fully knew that Max was suicidal before any messages were sent. Plus, Max's initial reply to the incoming text was the warning that he was in a poor state of mind and feeling suicidal. This was an intentional attack on a vulnerable person.
2. There is currently no law in Kansas to penalize those who prey upon emotionally or mentally vulnerable people in this way. There is currently zero consequences for this act in the State of Kansas.

I can't do anything about #1. What's done is done.

Instead, I am focusing my energy on #2. Because there is another Max out there who needs this law to cause the person on the other end of that screen to pause, think, and reroute their actions. This is for the next Max, the next mom, the next dad, the next sibling.

I am working with Rep. Nick Hoheisel to present a bill before your committee to make it criminal to encourage another to commit suicide. This type of harassment that ends in self-harm and suicide must be criminalized in order to result in prevention. I have attached 103 letters from Max's peers, friends, family, and people from all over the United States that have heard Max's story, each pleading for change. I hope you'll take the time to read each one.

It is important for you to understand that I am not seeking retribution, there will not be any retroactive consequences for those involved in Max's situation. I believe this law will be similar to drunk driving laws that are preventative with looming consequences that have the power to alter behavior.

I look forward to standing before the committee to tell Max's story on January 31<sup>st</sup>, but please know that an average of 10 Kansans are dying by suicide every week. It is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most common way Kansans between 10-34 are dying. You will hear Max's story, but please know that I stand in front of you representing the other 520 Kansans projected to die by suicide this year. Let's save them. Let's do something, anything to protect these vulnerable individuals. The best societies in the world protect their most vulnerable citizens; children, elderly, and handicapped...but what about those vulnerable in spirit?

It's time for Kansas to take a stand and lead the charge in the US for changes in the law that will lead to stronger prevention. Kansas is already in the top 12 states for suicide prevalence, let's change things and become one of the only handful of states in the US who have passed this preventative law.

Let's face it, prevention is more than a poster. Let's show Kansans that we see, hear, and feel the pain of suicide and wish to see a real change.

Here is a news story that ran last week on Max's story and our efforts: [Legislation for suicide prevention - KAKE](#)

Max would have been 22 years old on January 15<sup>th</sup>.



#LiveToTheMax

Thank you for your consideration,

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