

House Committee on Federal and State Affairs

March 13th, 2025

Proponent of HB2379

Chairman Kessler and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 2379. My name is Whit Downing and I am here in support of HB2379. I wholeheartedly want to be able to put myself on a no-sell list for firearms.

I am an avid Rubik's Cube lover. I'm a proud cat mom. I am an aunt, a sister, a daughter, and a friend. I lead a statewide mental health support group and work to make the world better for people with disabilities and mental health conditions.

I am so many things. What I never want to be is *just* a person struggling with suicidal thoughts.

And yet, those thoughts are part of *my reality*.

I live with Autism, Depression, and PTSD. I have survived a suicide attempt. I have spent time in psychiatric hospitals.

I recently gained my first full-time job with the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities. I love that I get to do what I am most passionate about. But even with all the progress I've made, I still have days where my brain tells me a story that isn't true... that I am a burden and that the people I love, and who love me, would be better off if I were dead.

Do you know what it feels like to be trapped inside your own mind, feeling like your brain is broken, and like you have no other choice but to die? It is terrifying. It is lonely. It is a battle that no one should have to fight alone.

And that is why I am here today, asking you to pass HB 2379.

The things that have helped keep me alive are pretty simple. It's a friend reminding me they love me. A therapist that understands me. It's having a safety plan and making sure my environment is safe before I even reach a crisis point.

This bill would give me and so many others the ability to make a choice while we are thinking rationally to say, "I know myself. I know my struggles. And I want to protect myself from a moment of desperation."

I cannot count the number of times I have begged my own brain to let me stay. I cannot count the number of times I have whispered to myself to just hold on through the night. **I want to live.** I want to keep being an aunt, a sister, a friend. But I also know that when the thoughts become too intense in my head, I don't always trust myself to make the safest decision.

If I could put myself on a no-sell list, it wouldn't take anything away from me. It would make me safe. And safety, in moments of my crisis, could mean life or death.

I don't want to become another name on a list of lives lost too soon by suicide. I don't want my family to sit in a room like this someday, testifying not in support of prevention, but in memory of me.

Please pass HB2379. Give people like me the option to choose to stay alive before a crisis takes that choice away.

Thank you for listening!

I stand for questions at the appropriate time.

Whit Downing