



Rep. Bruce Braley
Statement for the Record
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Energy and Commerce
Hearing on Suicide Prevention and Treatment: Helping Loved Ones in Mental Health Crisis

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for holding this important hearing on a topic that is very important to my family and me. In 2010, my niece Kayla Thomas took her life after struggling with depression. Kayla was a wonderful person who was compassionate and kind-hearted. She was active on her school speech team and enjoyed writing poetry and shopping. We miss Kayla every day.

Like tens of thousands of Americans each year, Kayla was a victim of suicide. In 2010, suicide claimed the lives of over 38 thousand Americans, including Kayla's. This equated to an average of 105 suicides each day. Amongst 15-24 year olds, suicide accounts for 20% of all deaths and is the second leading cause of death. These statistics make it evident that more must be done to prevent teen suicide.

Suicide rates amongst veterans are also extremely troubling. Between 2009 and 2011, the suicide rate of veterans under the age of 30 increased by 44 percent. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, an average of 22 veterans take their lives each day. Native American suicide rates are also unacceptably high. According to the Centers for Disease Control, between 2005 and 2009 the highest suicide rates were amongst Native Americans. This issue does not get enough attention here in Congress, and we should be working to address this tragic problem.

I've co-sponsored two pieces of legislation that address suicide among veterans and Native Americans. I'm a co-sponsor of the *Clay Hunt SAV Act* which is a comprehensive bill to prevent suicide amongst veterans and help them get the care that they need. I'm also a co-sponsor of the *Native American Suicide Prevention Act* which would require states to consult with Native American tribes and tribal organizations in creating and implementing their suicide prevention and intervention strategies.

I'll continue to work with my colleagues to pass these important bills and work to find more ways in which we can prevent suicide. Thank you again, Mr. Chairman for holding this important hearing.