

# Access Advocacy



American  
Foundation  
for Suicide  
Prevention

Dear Cassidy,

Welcome to April's Access Advocacy! We have some exciting news to share with you: **we moved!** Our new Public Policy office is still steps away from Capitol Hill so we can continue prioritizing suicide prevention policy and advocacy with lawmakers at every government level.

Keep reading to discover what AFSP's public policy office has been up to this past quarter, learn about some of our incredible volunteers and chapters, and find upcoming events!



Photo of the U.S. Capitol taken from the new office at 50 F St NW, Washington, D.C.

**May Mental Awareness Health Month is right around the corner and we have a lot of programming coming up to engage our advocates!**



- **May 2 at 2pm Eastern:** Webinar with the Employee Benefits Security Administration (within the U.S. Department of Labor) to talk about Mental Health Parity and your rights. [Click here to participate.](#)
- **May 20 at 4:00pm Eastern:** Veterans Suicide Prevention focused Webinar via Facebook Live [@afspnational](#)
- **Share your advocacy story with us!** Film yourself answering one of the following questions within 15 seconds and upload it to this [Google Folder](#). AFSP will then be sharing select advocate stories on our social media channels.
  - What has been your favorite advocacy moment with AFSP
  - What impact can AFSP advocates have with their lawmakers?

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## Advocacy Highlights

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (March 22, 2024)** – The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel shared an important new [proposal](#) to improve access to services via the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. The proposal seeks to improve how wireless calls are routed to the 988 Lifeline, connecting people quickly and safely to the nearest call center based on their approximate geographic location, while protecting user privacy.

AFSP is heartened to see the collaboration of bipartisan Congressional leaders and the FCC to build up the 988 Lifeline to be as robust and effective as it can be. We look forward to working with the FCC on this important new proposed rule.

You can read our full press release [here](#).



Pictured from left to right: Hon. Tony Cardenas (CA-29), HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra, Chair of the FCC Jessica Rosenworcel, Hon. Alex Padilla (CA), Hon. Thom Tillis (NC)

**“The American people deserve the peace of mind and confidence that when they call 988, there will be someone answering that call, someone to come quickly if they need it, and somewhere to go to get compassionate care. Today, I believe we have delivered hope to many.”**

- The Honorable Tony Cardenas (CA-29)

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## Legislative Updates

### Federal

After a series of congressional resolutions keeping the federal government operating in FY24, Congress passed its federal funding bill for for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which included \$520M for the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#), an \$18 million increase over FY23 levels, and \$30M for the [CDC's Comprehensive Suicide Prevention program CSP](#), the same level as FY23. **Thank you for your advocacy to secure federal funding for these critical programs!**

President Biden released his federal budget proposal for FY25, which continues to [emphasize mental health and suicide prevention](#). Stay tuned for more information about how you can help support of FY25 funding for key programs including 988, the CSP, and a new innovative HHS partnership between the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Administration for Community Living to address suicide among older adults.

The *Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Reauthorization Act* ([H.R.7153/S.3679](#)) to support health care provider mental health was approved by the House Energy & Commerce Committee in March and we hope to see it go to the full House of Representatives for a vote soon! Additionally, the Senate passed a resolution to designate March 18 as “Health Workforce Well-Being Day of Awareness”, led by Senators Tim Kaine (VA) and Roger Marshall (KS).

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## State

AFSP chapters have held **34 State Capitol Day events so far this year**, with [several more planned](#) throughout April and May. Thank you to all the advocates involved in planning, executing, and attending these impactful events! Top event policy priority areas include: (1) Firearms and lethal means safety; (2) Children, teens, and young adults; and (3) 988 and crisis services.

**AFSP advocates have taken action on over 90 state bills this year! Eight of those have been enacted into law**, and several more are awaiting governor action. Enacted bills include:

- [Indiana SB 10](#) (absorbed into [HB 1385](#), Section 3): Creates a grant program to help with starting or expanding mobile crisis response.
- [Indiana SB 233](#) (absorbed into [HB 1067](#), Section 11): Addresses Medicaid reimbursement for community behavioral health services.
- [Kansas HB 2557](#): Expands the scope of peer support counseling for first responders.
- [Kentucky HB 30](#) and [New Mexico HB 298](#): Create statewide suicide prevention programs for Service Members, Veterans, and their families.
- [Oregon SB 1503](#): Creates a gun violence and suicide prevention task force.
- [Washington SB 5853](#) & [SB 6251](#): Expands 23-hour Crisis Relief Centers to serve children ages 8+, and improves 988 and 911 coordination.

Visit our [State Bills](#) page to learn more and to see where other priority bills currently are in the legislative process. You can also visit our [Action Center](#) at any time to find current opportunities to join in on our actions and lend your voice!

**Our State Capitol Days are in full swing! Here are some photos from a few great events:**



[AFSP Wyoming](#)



[AFSP West Virginia](#)



[AFSP Minnesota](#)



[AFSP Utah](#)

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## Policy Resources

The Coalition for Health Funding, of which AFSP is a member recently released a video on the federal appropriations process. The video outlines how the appropriations process *should* work and how it *does* work.

**Is your member of Congress on an Appropriations Committee?** Visit the AFSP Action Center through the Take Action button below to find out and urge their support of funding for 988!

## Chapter Advocacy Spotlight



### 988 - More Than Just a Phone Number

Building the Raft While Drowning: Mental Health Advocacy in Rural America • Feb 22, 2024



00:00

Share 25:32



### 988 - More Than Just a Phone Number

Feb 22, 2024

In this episode I am joined by Jeremy Brown, Outreach Director for FirstLink. Based out of Fargo, ND FirstLink is a free, confidential service that offers listening and support, referrals to resources, and crisis intervention 24 hours a day. Jeremy and I will be talking about 988, the National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline that was signed into law in 2020. We'll discuss the importance of 988 within the larger scope of North Dakota's Behavioral Health System and how FirstLink plays a critical role in its implementation.

See less

25:32

AFSP Advocacy Ambassador Sarah Dixon-Hackey of North Dakota is joined by Jeremy Brown, Outreach Director for FirstLink.

Click the photo to listen as Sarah and Jeremy talk about the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline!

## AFSP Advocacy in the News



Representative Kaohly Vang Her  
Mar 22 · 🌐

Constituents with [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention AFSP Minnesota](#) shared their personal stories of why this work matters to them. They also reviewed their legislative priorities and asked for my support. Suicide is an issue that impacts my family deeply and personally. I still remember where I was and what I was doing when I learned that my brother-in-law had taken his life. Thank you advocates for prioritizing this issue. I am with you.



Rep. Andrew Gray  
Mar 22 · 🌐

Thank you to the [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention - Alaska Chapter](#) for speaking with me in Juneau this week.

Thank you to the AFSP advocates (including one of our HD 20 neighbors, Dustin Morris) for doing such important work for Alaska.

If you or someone you know is struggling, please call 988 or text TALK to 741741 - help is available.

#akleg



State Representative Robyn Vining is at Wisconsin State Capitol.  
Mar 12 · 🌐

Don't be fooled—the best part of this meeting with Tosa East students today wasn't me talking, it was their words and their advocacy in my office!

Today in Madison was the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP-WI) Advocacy Meeting, and I had the honor to be visited by Wauwatosa students. I'm grateful to learn from them—I'm taking their words to heart.



State Senator MD Rahman is at Connecticut State Capitol.  
Mar 19 · 🌐

The [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Connecticut Chapter](#) hosted their annual legislative breakfast today. I had the opportunity to meet some amazing students from Manchester High School, and discuss the importance of suicide prevention, improving mental health care across the state, and supporting our youth.

Too often serious mental and emotional health issues go unaddressed or overlooked. Raising awareness about these issues and the struggles people face every day is the first step to confronting suffering and helping people to find hope. [#mentalhealthmatters](#) ❤️



[Wisconsin Stories of resilience emerge following Journal Sentinel gun project](#)

[Wyoming Suicide prevention group offers breakfast to lawmakers willing to listen](#)

[Maine Doudera bill targets reduction of firearm suicide deaths](#)

[Georgia Georgia bill proposes voluntary 'do not sell' list for firearms](#)

[Minnesota The American Foundation Suicide Prevention: Providing resources and advocacy opportunities](#)

[Missouri Suicide prevention advocates meet Missouri legislators: Tackling mental health crisis](#)

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## Upcoming Events

- **May 2 at 2pm Eastern** AFSP is hosting a webinar with the Employee Benefits Security Administration (within the U.S. Department of Labor) to talk about Mental Health Parity and your rights in the workforce. [Click here to participate.](#)
- **May 20 at 4:00pm Eastern** AFSP is hosting a Veterans Suicide Prevention Webinar via Facebook Live [@afspnational](#).
- **June 8 - June 12 is our 15th Annual Advocacy Forum!** AFSP advocates from around the country will meet with their U.S. Senators and Representatives in Washington, D.C. and experience several days of advocacy training.

## Advocacy Tips

"Most government hearings are open to the public and live streamed so you can watch the policy process and get involved anywhere. Check out your local government's event page for policy and educational opportunities in cool places like city hall or your state capitol building - you never know what exciting events could be taking place!"  
-AFSP Public Policy Intern Rossina Ruano

**Are you working with your AFSP Chapter and making headlines? Let us know! Email your work to [advocacy@afsp.org](mailto:advocacy@afsp.org) to potentially be featured in our next newsletter.**

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AFSP Public Policy Office  
50 F Street NW, Suite 330  
Washington, DC 20001  
202-449-3600



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