

# Access Advocacy



American  
Foundation  
for Suicide  
Prevention

Dear Kim,

July Access Advocacy is here and it's an exciting time in suicide prevention policy, as the [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline turns 2 today, July 16!](#) We hope you enjoy hearing about all the work AFSP has been doing to support 988 and how YOU can get involved!

We've been busy here in Washington, DC – from hosting the [15th Annual Advocacy Forum](#) to combing through the newly released [2024 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention](#).



## Advocacy Wins

### WASHINGTON, D.C.

From Sunday June 9th to Wednesday June 12th, AFSP hosted its [15th Annual Advocacy Forum](#)! Together, nearly 250 AFSP Volunteer Advocates celebrated "[15 years of Advocating for Suicide Prevention](#)" and participated in educational sessions on legislation to improve mental health and save lives.

You can watch our Virtual Advocacy Forum and remarks from former Congressman Patrick J. Kennedy by visiting the 2024 Advocacy Forum webpage [here](#).

You can view photos from the event on [Facebook](#) and read our Hope Hub blog on the Advocacy Forum [here](#) or by clicking the photo to the right!

### Here are some great statistics from the Forum:

- [229](#) advocates went on legislative meetings
- [274](#) scheduled meetings
- [98](#) Senate office meetings
- [176](#) House office meetings
- [36](#) meetings with members of Congress
- [62](#) meetings with senior level staff
- [57 new cosponsors on our 3 federal bills!](#)



### Advocating for 988 at AFSP's 15th Annual Advocacy Forum

From Sunday June 9th to Wednesday June 12th, AFSP hosted its 15th Annual Advocacy Forum! Together, nearly 250 AFSP Volunteer Advocates celebrated "15 years of Advocating for Suicide Prevention" and participated in educational sessions on legislation to improve mental health and save lives.

**Don't forget - You can still  
"Advocate for 988" by  
clicking the button below to  
contact your legislators and  
make your voice heard!**

## Quotes from Volunteer Advocates at the 2024 Advocacy Forum

"I have been telling anyone and everyone how easy advocating is with AFSP! Too easy as in the few minutes it takes to send an email to our representatives, you can save hundreds of years of life!"

"The experience is transformational when it comes to advocating for responsible public policy surrounding mental health and suicide prevention!"

"Everyone should have the experience to speak in person to a legislator. It gives one a feeling of empowerment that we, the public, have a say in the laws of the land."

"I think it is important for people to see and feel that they are part of something bigger than their own world, their own chapter. The power of community."

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## Legislative Updates

### Federal

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has released the [2024 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention \(NSSP\)](#)! The NSSP is a bold 10-year, comprehensive, whole-of-society approach to suicide prevention that provides concrete recommendations for addressing gaps in the suicide prevention field. **Read AFSP's statement on the NSSP [here](#).**

The U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy issued a landmark Surgeon General's Advisory on Firearm Violence, declaring firearm violence in America to be a public health crisis. This advisory is the first publication from the Office of the Surgeon General dedicated to this issue and highlights the impact that lethal means have on suicide and mental health. [Click here](#) to view the data and watch the Surgeon General's remarks. **To read AFSP's statement on firearm violence please [click here](#).**

Additional updates:

- The House Labor and Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee released their annual appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2025, which featured drastic cuts and the elimination of a key suicide prevention program at the CDC. AFSP joined the Safe States Alliance and more than 160 organizations on a [letter](#) to House Appropriations Committee to strongly oppose these cuts. As the appropriations process continues, we will keep advocating for increased funding for this and other suicide prevention programs.
- The FCC is carrying out its rulemaking process to provide georouting for 988. More than 450 AFSP advocates submitted public comment in support, thank you for your advocacy!

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### State

Last month AFSP officially wrapped up the 2024 State Capitol Day (SCD) season! A total of 48 SCD events were held this year, with nearly **2,000 advocates registering to attend an event**. This year we actively **supported 118 bills at SCD events, and [20 have already been enacted into law](#)**. These bills include:

- [Colorado SB24-055](#): Establishes the Agricultural and Rural Community Behavioral Health Program, the Agricultural and Rural Community Behavioral Health Liaison, and Agricultural

Behavioral Health Grant Program to support the behavioral health care of individuals involved in agriculture.

- [South Carolina SB 408](#): Requires licensed professional counselors, marriage and family therapists, addiction counselors, and social workers to undergo suicide prevention training.
- [Louisiana SB 190](#): Raises Medicaid reimbursement rates for certain mental health services to 100% of Medicare reimbursement rates.
- [Nebraska LB 1200 Sections 66-69](#): Strengthens coordination between Nebraska's 911 and 988 systems.

We also celebrated the enactment of two more 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline telecom fee bills in Maryland ([HB 933/SB 974](#)) and Vermont ([H 657](#)), bringing the total number of states with a 988 telecom fee to 10. To learn more about this effort, see our press release [here](#).

To learn more about these bills, and how you can get involved, visit the [AFSP State Bills page](#).

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## Policy Resources

July is National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month, and in recognition Department of Health and Human Services has released a [statement](#) and [toolkit](#) to help raise awareness and increase support for populations who are disproportionately impacted by suicide. Learn more about our [public policy positions](#) on diverse, underserved, and disproportionately impacted communities and populations. You can learn more about AFSP's work to support diverse communities [here](#).



The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration ([SAMHSA](#)) has issued a "[Guidance to States and Communities on Using Federal Funding to Support Mental Health Services for LGBTQI+ Youth](#)"!

This guidance outlines how states and communities can use SAMHSA funding to support mental health services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and other gender diverse youth (LGBTQI+) with examples from BSCA grantees.

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## Chapter Advocacy Spotlight



[AFSP Maryland](#) joins as Governor Moore signs into law the ***Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services - 988 Trust Fund Fees (SB 974/HB 933)***. This critical new law establishes a sustainable source of state funding for the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline in Maryland. This policy success would not have been possible without our Maryland AFSP volunteer advocates! Read AFSP's release [here](#).

## AFSP Advocacy in the News

**Texas**  
[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline nears two-year anniversary as organizations push for more resources](#)

**West Virginia**  
[Advocates talk suicide prevention at D.C. forum](#)

**Maryland**  
[Permanent Funding for 988 Passes](#)

**Illinois**  
[217 Tales: Mental Health Awareness Month w/ AFSP Illinois](#)



4:31 PM · Jun 11, 2024 · 1,870 Views



6:34 PM · Jun 11, 2024 · 2,842 Views



11:27 AM · Jun 12, 2024 · 1,177 Views

## Advocacy Tips

Want your emails to legislators to have more of an impact? Customize them! Your story is important and deserves to be shared. Statistics show that adding a personal message increases reach of pre-written emails. Next time you're taking action for suicide prevention, considering writing a line or two on why it's important to YOU!

If you haven't visited the AFSP Action Center before, check out our how-to videos on the AFSP Advocacy Resources page [here](#).

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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