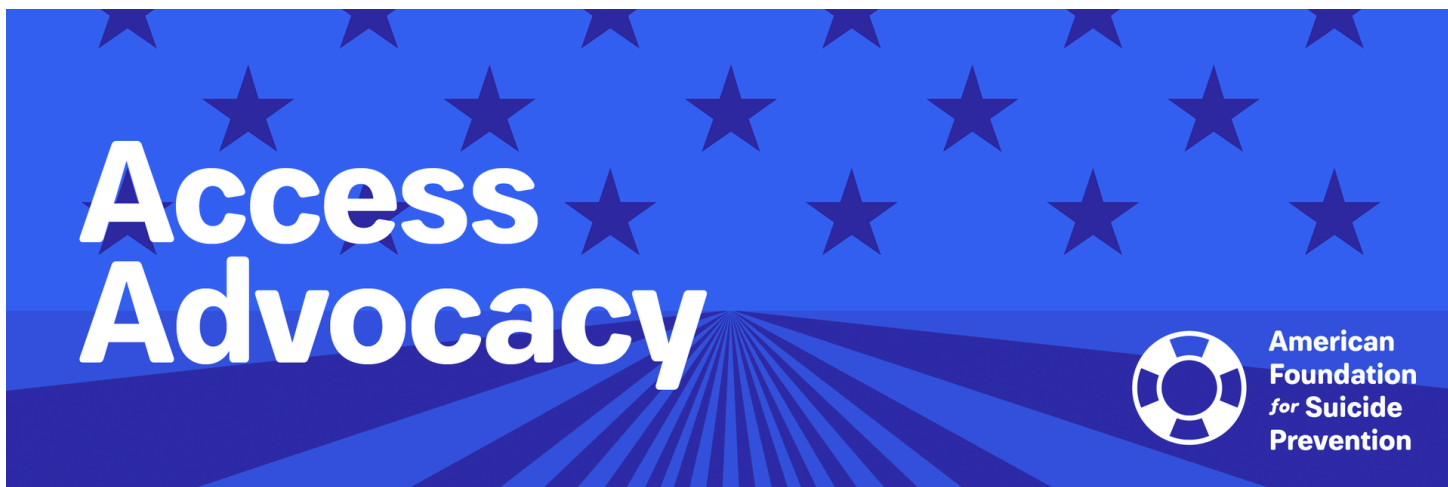




Happy Fall, and welcome to the October 2026 edition of Access Advocacy!

Each October AFSP announces its grant recipients and highlights other innovative scientific research from the research community that deepens our understanding of suicide and, importantly, what we can do to prevent it. Research is a cornerstone of our policy and advocacy work. It provides the evidence that helps shape our priorities, inform policy solutions, and advance changes that can save lives. Check out our [**new timeline of important moments in suicide prevention research**](#) and [**explore our research library**](#) to learn more.

At AFSP, we believe policy is prevention. Our role is to help bridge the gap between what we know through research and the policies, systems, and practices that can put that knowledge into action.

We're also recognizing **Hispanic Heritage Month**, observed from September 15 through October 15, by highlighting resources that support suicide prevention and mental health awareness in Hispanic and Latinx communities. Research helps us better understand how culture, community, lived experience, and access to care can influence mental health outcomes. Through resources like AFSP's **Talk Saves Lives: Latinx and Hispanic Communities** program, we aim to ensure that suicide prevention education is culturally relevant, accessible, and responsive to the needs of the communities we serve.

During Hispanic Heritage Month, we welcome you to attend a presentation of *Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide for Latinx and Hispanic Communities* and encourage you to share this opportunity and invite anyone interested to participate:

- October 7 | *Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide for Latinx and Hispanic Communities* | [**Register here**](#) | [**Flyer**](#)

As you read this month's *Access Advocacy*, I invite you to reflect on this question:

How can research help us better understand what works, and how can we use that knowledge to strengthen our advocacy, inform policy, and help prevent suicide in every community?

Whether you're advocating for stronger crisis response systems, greater access to mental health care, expanded research investments, or other suicide prevention priorities, research helps ensure that our efforts are grounded in evidence and focused on the solutions that can have the greatest impact.

Want to learn more about the research behind suicide prevention? Explore AFSP's latest research initiatives, findings, and resources to see how scientific discovery continues to advance our mission at afsp.org/research.

Thank you for being part of this work and for staying informed, engaged, and committed to saving lives. Together, we can turn knowledge into action.

With gratitude,

Laurel Stine, JD, MA
Executive Vice President and Chief Policy & Advocacy Officer

Policy & Advocacy Updates

State

National Suicide Prevention Month

This September, AFSP advocates helped secure **24 Suicide Prevention Month or Week proclamations** across the country, including **six statewide proclamations and 18 local proclamations**. Through these efforts, advocates raised awareness that suicide is a public health issue, highlighted the importance of prevention, and shared the message that there is hope and that many lives can be saved.

A special shoutout to the AFSP Wisconsin Chapter, which secured **twelve** proclamations this year, the most of any AFSP chapter so far. Thank you for your dedication to elevating suicide prevention in communities across your state!

If your chapter secured a proclamation and has not yet shared it with us, please email the details to advocacy@afsp.org so we can add it to our list and celebrate your advocacy efforts.



Charles County, Maryland



California - House Resolution 126



Village of Butler, Wisconsin

Out of the Darkness Walk Season Is Underway

Thousands of people are participating in AFSP's Out of the Darkness Community Walks this fall. Walks are an opportunity to build community, raise awareness, support those affected by suicide, and connect with local AFSP chapter activities, including advocacy opportunities. **[Find a Walk near you.](#)**



Advocacy Action Days (AADs)

Thanks to the dedication of AFSP advocates across the country, **35 state bills have been enacted in 2026 as of September 22!** These victories reflect the power of advocacy, partnerships with lawmakers, working in coalition, and the voices of advocates who shared their experiences in support of suicide prevention policies.

Most recently, the **District of Columbia** passed one of our Advocacy Action Day priorities, establishing a telecom fee to support funding for the **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** and related crisis response services. The legislation is currently awaiting congressional approval.

To learn more about the state legislation AFSP is supporting or opposing, visit **afsp.org/statebills**.

Interested in making a difference through advocacy and helping to shape your state's **2027 Advocacy Action Day**? Connect with **your local AFSP chapter** to learn how you can get involved in planning, organizing, and advocating for suicide prevention policies in your community.

Federal

2026 Capitol Hill Fly-In Wrap-Up

During National Suicide Prevention Month, **AFSP advocates traveled to Washington, D.C.** for our second annual Capitol Hill Fly-In, where they met directly with members of Congress and their staff to advance critical suicide prevention legislation and federal funding priorities.

Sponsored for the second consecutive year by the **AFSP Illinois Chapter**, this year's Fly-In brought together **17 Volunteer Advocates from 14 states**. Advocates shared their stories of loss and lived experience while urging members of Congress to support the following:

Funding Priorities

- **Robust funding for the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (\$549.6M)**
- **Increased investment in CDC's Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Program (\$38M)**
- **Strong support for the National Institute of Mental Health (\$2.548B)**

Legislative Priorities

- **Barriers to Suicide Act (H.R.3505/S.5558)** and **suicide-specific barriers language in the Surface Transportation Reauthorization package**
- **Saving Our Veterans Lives Act (H.R.1987/S. 926)**

The impact of these meetings is already being felt.

Following this year's Fly-In, **U.S. Senators Alex Padilla (CA) and Thom Tillis (NC)**, co-chairs of the bipartisan Senate Mental Health Caucus, **introduced** the Senate version of the **Barriers to Suicide Act (S. 5558)** on September 24.



This marks the **first time a Senate companion bill has been introduced** since the Barriers bill was first introduced in the House in 2019 and represents a major milestone in the effort to enact this lifesaving legislation. AFSP was pleased to the Capitol Hill Fly-In and the bipartisan Senate introduction of **S.5558** covered in Politico news.

Now We Need YOUR Help

Our advocates helped bring these priorities directly to Congress, but sustained progress requires continued engagement.

Please contact your members of Congress **today** and urge their support for bipartisan legislation and federal investments that strengthen suicide prevention, improve crisis response services, support veterans, and help communities implement evidence-based prevention strategies.

Click **"Take Action"** to send a message to your lawmakers. A pre-drafted message is ready for you to personalize and send.

[Take Action](#)

AFSP Welcomes Restoration of Specialized 988 Support for LGBTQ+ Youth

AFSP is grateful to see the restoration and operation of the **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Press 3 option**, which connects LGBTQ+ youth with uniquely trained counselors and specialized services. Specialized, affirming crisis support is critical to ensuring that LGBTQ+ young people who reach out for help can connect with services that understand and respond to their needs and experiences. Facing stigma and discrimination, LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to experience suicide risk, making access to specialized support an important component of suicide prevention efforts.

AFSP is especially thankful to the bipartisan members of Congress who championed its restoration and remained steadfast in their efforts for more than a year to see this specialized support return. We are also proud of AFSP's volunteer advocates, whose persistence helped keep this issue at the forefront alongside coalition partners and the broader mental health community.

Read AFSP's full statement here: **[AFSP Statement by Bob Gebbia, CEO, on Restoration of Specialized 988 Support for LGBTQ+ Youth](#)**

Congress Honors Suicide Prevention Month and 988 Day

During September, members of Congress introduced bipartisan resolutions recognizing **National Suicide Prevention Month**, **988 Day**, and **National Physician Suicide Awareness Day**, underscoring the growing bipartisan commitment to suicide prevention and mental health.

The resolutions include:

- **National Suicide Prevention Month ([H.Res. 1582/S.Res. 899](#))**
- **988 Day ([H.Res. 1514/S.Res. 853](#))**
- **National Physician Suicide Awareness Day ([H.Res. 1519](#))**

In addition, **Congresswoman Doris Matsui (CA-07)** and **Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick (PA-01)** reintroduced the **[988 Implementation Act \(H.R. 10280\)](#)**, a comprehensive legislative package designed to provide states with federal resources to strengthen crisis response infrastructure and support the continued implementation of the **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**.

Other Federal Progress

Congress also passed the **Youth Poisoning Protection Act ([H.R. 1442/S. 289](#))**, legislation endorsed by AFSP and its Volunteer Advocates that helps reduce access to lethal means and strengthen prevention efforts.

The bill is currently awaiting the President's signature.

To learn more, read AFSP's **[press release](#)** on recent federal suicide prevention advocacy efforts.

New & Notable

- This month, the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) recognized AFSP's **[L.E.T.S \(Listening, Empathy, Trust, Support\) Save Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention](#)**

for Black and African American Communities program on its **Best Practices Registry (BPR)** for its culturally informed approach and safe messaging.

- We've updated our resource on how to use the SPRC State Suicide Prevention Infrastructure Recommendations at **afsp.org/SPRCStateRecommendations**
- NAMI published their key findings on 988 awareness, usage, funding, and mental health care access from their **Public Perspectives on 988 & Crisis Response** NAMI/Ipsos poll.
- SAMHSA released the latest (2025) findings from the **National Survey on Drug Use and Health** (NSDUH), an annual survey of behavioral health among people ages 12 and older in the U.S.
- The CDC published **Youth Health in Focus Findings From the National Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2015–2025**, providing a snapshot of the health and well-being of high school students in the United States in 2025 and changes over the past 2 and 10 years.

afsp.org/advocacy