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Trahan, Carey, Porter, Stewart Unveil Bipartisan Legislation to Stop Online Suicide Assistance Forums

WASHINGTON, DC – On Monday, **Representatives Lori Trahan (D-MA-03), Mike Carey (R-OH-15), Katie Porter (D-CA-45), and Chris Stewart (R-UT-02)** introduced the *Stop Online Suicide Assistance Forums Act*, bipartisan legislation that will make it a felony offense for anyone who uses mail or interstate communications such as online forums to assist in another person’s attempt to die by suicide. The new legislation would give the U.S. Department of Justice additional authority to pursue cases against suicide assistance forums, including a popular site recently covered by a [New York Times investigation](#).

“We’re facing a mental health crisis in our nation, and suicide – particularly among young people – is dangerously on the rise. The last thing we need right now is an online forum operating in the shadows of the internet that actively encourages and even assists people to die by suicide,” **said Congresswoman Trahan**. “Suicidal ideation must be met with mental health care and therapies focused on prevention – not real-time instructions and encouragement to die by suicide. This bipartisan legislation will finally ensure the Department of Justice has the authority necessary to target websites and users that push those in need of help toward self-harm instead.”

“As America’s mental health crisis has escalated in recent years, so too has the rise of malicious actors seeking to take advantage of those who believe suicide is their only option,” **said Congressman Carey**. “Online suicide assistance forums are making this crisis worse and it’s time we take a stand by passing the Stop Online Suicide Assistance Forums Act to bring justice for the victims and hold these criminals accountable.”

“It is heartbreaking for families to lose a loved one to suicide and despicable that online forums would push people in crisis to attempt suicide,” **said Congresswoman Porter**. “Cracking down on online suicide assistance forums will protect teens and young adults, who disproportionately make up the users for these sites and are most vulnerable to suicide.”

“This legislation has broad, bipartisan support for one simple reason: it’s necessary,” **said Congressman Stewart**. “Suicide is an issue that hits home for everyone – it’s a top ten cause of death nationwide, as well as in my home state. If we want to reverse this tragic trend, that means eliminating environments that work to keep us on the same path. Simply put, online suicide assistance forums have no place in our communities. It’s time there be consequences for assisting another individual’s suicide attempt. I’m proud to introduce this legislation alongside my Democrat colleagues, and I’m eager to continue our work toward a healthier nation.”

Online suicide assistance forums, where people can find detailed instructions and real-time assistance on how to die by suicide, are attracting millions of viewers per month. Many of these sites have easily accessible pages championing highly lethal suicide methods and hundreds of threads pushing distressed users to attempt to die by suicide. A prominent feature of these sites are “goodbye threads”, where a member actively declares their intention to die by suicide and often documents the process in real time, all while others provide advice and encouragement to advance the attempt.

The *Stop Online Suicide Assistance Forums Act* is simple. It establishes a felony offense for anyone who uses mail or interstate communication, including online forums, to intentionally assist in another individual’s suicide attempt that results in death. The bipartisan legislation does not criminalize the act or attempt to die by suicide, and it does not impact state sanctioned physician-assisted end of life care.

The *Stop Online Suicide Assistance Forums Act* has been endorsed by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, the American Psychological Association, Suicide Awareness Voices of Education, RI International, the American Association of Psychiatric Pharmacists, the Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance, and Inseparable.

“AFSP applauds Representative Trahan for taking bold action toward protecting those most at risk of dying by suicide,” **said Robert Gebbia, CEO of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**. “We know that social media can be a powerful tool in uniting individuals and providing a sense of community, but it can also have dire consequences for those most vulnerable. Websites that encourage suicide and offer instructions are harmful, particularly to youth and young adults. This bill will enable DOJ to hold these website operators accountable for intentionally promoting dangerous content.”

“Anyone who uses an online forum to promote, support, endorse, encourage and/or contribute to the attempted suicide or death by suicide of someone must be stopped or countless lives will be lost to malicious individuals,” **said Dr. Dan Reidenberg, CEO of Suicide Awareness Voices of Education**. “I fully support this legislation to try and prevent those with the intent on causing harm to others from doing so by imposing substantial penalties and hope others join this effort to SAVE more lives.”

“The American Association of Psychiatric Pharmacists (AAPP) is concerned that the national rate of suicide in the United States remains in an upward trajectory. AAPP applauds the introduction of the Stop Online Suicide Assistance Forums Act,” **said Brenda Schimenti, Executive Director of the American Association of Psychiatric Pharmacists.** “As clinicians serving on mental health care teams, psychiatric pharmacists treat patients with severe mental illness screening for and potentially preventing suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Those experiencing suicidal ideation deserve safe, appropriate, and effective treatment.”

“We need to do everything we can to save lives and reduce the heartbreaking toll of suicide, including closing loopholes that allow online platforms to push people toward dying by suicide,” **said Bill Smith, President and Founder of Inseparable.**

A digital copy of the legislation as introduced can be accessed [HERE](#).

If you or someone you know is having suicidal thoughts, feeling at risk of suicide, or experiencing a state of distress, it is crucial to find help immediately. There are many [resources available](#), including the [988 Suicide & Crisis Hotline](#) which provides free, confidential support 24/7, and the [Crisis Text Line](#) which offers free crisis counseling 24/7. Dial 988 or text HOME to 741741 to connect with these services.

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