



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pamela Helming

## Helming: Time to Recognize Suicide Crisis

PAMELA HELMING September 16, 2019

This week is National Suicide Prevention Week and it is a time for us all to take a moment to pause and remember those we have lost and the friends and family that have been left behind. It is also an important reminder for us to reach out to those who are dealing with mental health issues and to redouble our efforts to ensure that those struggling with depression have the tools they need to find help.

For many years, there has been a societal stigma attached to mental illness and suicide. On top of this stigma, people do not like to think about the painful loss of a loved one. However, issues related to mental health and suicide are becoming more and more prevalent in our society. We need to talk about these issues and face them head on so people know there is hope.

800,000 people per year die from suicide. In our region alone, Seneca County has a suicide rate in the top 10th percentile in New York State. This is something that has an effect on every one of us. We need to not only find ways to talk to those who are thinking about suicide or who are depressed, but also find ways to improve access to mental health services.

The Senate recently held a joint public hearing on suicide and suicide prevention. It was an honor to invite Donna Besler and the Folk family to attend and testify at this hearing to share their personal stories. I extend my heartfelt thanks to these courageous individuals

and the many other special advocates in our region who take the time to share their stories and fight on behalf of mental health issues.

These tireless champions show us that there is hope and every life is a sacred gift. We have the power as friends, family, and coworkers to help those experiencing mental health crises. As a community, we can build on the terrific work so many advocates have started and make sure that we have the tools and resources available to assist those in crisis.

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention has a number of tools which can help people identify signs and find treatment. To learn more, visit [www.afsp.org/about-suicide](http://www.afsp.org/about-suicide). Additionally, 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress and those trying to assist them is available by calling the National Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.

If you are interested in learning more, you can connect with you local county mental health office or contact my district office at 315-568-9816. Together, we can make a difference!