

To whomever it may concern,

I remember the day I met my best friend, Max Coleman. I was in the 5th grade and Max walked in with a wide smile on his face and a bright orange and navy-blue Broncos Jersey. It was the jersey of his favorite player, Peyton Manning. Max and I quickly became good friends in school and out of school. Our love for sports, Spiderman, the TV show "Lost", and video games created an inseverable bond. Even through the distance of moving away for college, we remained close friends. On April 14, 2023, I lost my best friend. I lost the most loyal, funny, and hard-working individual I've ever known. If you needed him, he was there for you, usually making you laugh along the way. I know how fragile the emotions and thoughts of a heartbroken individual are; how easily twisted and manipulated they are. My heart aches for his family and all of his friends. What happened to Max is disgusting, though not uncommon. Suicide has become a serious problem for my generation. Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for my age group (10-24), and 531 suicides for all age groups in 2020. 531 families. 531 lives taken too soon. That is unacceptable. It is about time that we stop sweeping it under the rug and do something about it. This bill is the first step of many to help protect vulnerable individuals like Max. What happened was preventable. And that is why I am joining Jill Janes and Max's family and friends to push for change. The State of Kansas needs the legislature to act, to prevent this type of loss, and to prevent evil from winning. I hope this letter comes across in good faith, as I want this change to prevent another loss while continuing to remember my friend for the great man he is.

I look forward to sharing more about the impact Max has had on my life during my testimony in support of House Bill 2488 on January 31, 2024.

Best,

Clayton Pettera