

Binder

REMARKS OF GOVERNOR THOMAS H. KEAN

PUBLIC BILL SIGNING S-2005

YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM

RUTHERFORD HIGH SCHOOL

RUTHERFORD, NEW JERSEY

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 26, 1985

THANK YOU MAYOR CHADWICK FOR THAT INTRODUCTION.

AND MY THANKS TO ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI AND SENATOR CODEY FOR
SPONSORING THIS BILL.

OUR COUNTRY IS GOING THROUGH RAPID SOCIAL CHANGES --- IN LIFESTYLES, FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS, AND MANY OTHERS WAYS. OUR SOCIETY IS MORE COMPLEX, AND TO SOME, MORE THREATENING, EVERY DAY. FAMILY STRUCTURES ARE DIFFERENT. YOUNG PEOPLE FACE MORE PRESSURES EARLIER IN THEIR LIVES THAN DID THOSE IN EARLIER GENERATIONS. CHANGES CAN BE GOOD --- BUT THEY HAVE A DARK SIDE AS WELL. THE FACT IS THAT THE MULTIPLICITY OF CHANGE IN OUR SOCIETY IS TAKING A HEAVY TOLL ON ADOLESCENTS, WHO ARE STRUGGLING WITH THEIR OWN CHANGES.

THE RESULTS HAVE FAR TOO OFTEN BEEN TRAGIC.

THE NATIONAL SUICIDE RATE HAS TRIPLED IN THE PAST 25 YEARS. AND FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, AGES 15 TO 24, SUICIDE IS THE SECOND HIGHEST CAUSE OF DEATH.

TODAY, TEENAGE SUICIDE IS A PROBLEM WE CAN NO LONGER IGNORE.

THAT'S WHY I'M HERE TODAY --- AT RUTHERFORD HIGH SCHOOL --- TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

TODAY, I AM SIGNING INTO LAW A BILL ESTABLISHING A YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM. THE PROGRAM WILL GIVE MONEY TO THREE LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES --- ONE EACH IN THE NORTHERN, CENTRAL, AND SOUTHERN REGIONS OF THE STATE. THESE CENTERS WILL WORK WITH TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IN LOCAL HIGH SCHOOLS TO HELP TEACH THEM THE WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE --- AND TO IDENTIFY WHERE TO GET HELP.

THE BILL ALSO ESTABLISHES A 10-MEMBER ADVISORY COUNCIL WHICH WILL RELAY INFORMATION AND SUGGESTIONS BACK TO THE STATE FOR HOW TO HELP STOP TEENAGE SUICIDE.

I'VE OFTEN SAID THE BEST THINGS WE CAN GIVE OUR CHILDREN ARE ROOTS AND WINGS. THE ROOTS OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS, AND THE LASTING VALUES THEY CAN HELP TRANSMIT; AND THE WINGS OF EDUCATION AND SELF-RELIANCE.

I HOPE THAT THIS PROGRAM WILL HELP FIND WAYS TO PLANT THE ROOTS AND SPREAD THOSE WINGS FOR TROUBLED TEENAGERS IN NEW JERSEY.

IT IS MY HOPE THAT THIS PROGRAM CAN EVENTUALLY REACH EVERY SCHOOL, AS IT WILL REACH RUTHERFORD HIGH THIS FALL. AND I HOPE THAT IT WILL MAKE EACH HIGH SCHOOL INTO A COMMUNITY. NOT JUST A PLACE WHERE YOU GO TO SIT IN CLASSROOMS, TAKE TESTS, AND LEAVE. BUT A PLACE WHERE YOU LEARN TO BE AWARE OF AND CARE ABOUT OTHERS. AND FEEL THAT PEOPLE CARE ABOUT YOU.

TRAINING TEACHERS AND STUDENTS TO RECOGNIZE THE WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE IN THEIR STUDENTS AND CLASSMATES WILL MAKE OUR SCHOOLS MORE CARING PLACES. AND BY OFFERING HELP, PERHAPS WE WILL MAKE THOSE WHO NEED IT FEEL AS IF THEY HAVE SOME ROOTS IN THEIR TROUBLED LIVES. ROOTS OF SUPPORT AND PEOPLE WHO CARE.

SEEING ALL OF YOU HERE TODAY --- SO MANY YOUNG FACES --- AS I SIGN THIS BILL REMINDS ME OF A STORY ABOUT ABRAHAM LINCOLN. DURING THE TIME HE WAS PRESIDENT HE LIKED TO TAKE LONG WALKS AROUND THE WHITE HOUSE GROUNDS. AND ONE TIME HE CAME UPON A LITTLE BOY CARRYING ANOTHER CHILD UP A STEEP HILL. AND THE PRESIDENT SAID TO HIM, "SON, ISN'T THAT TOO BIG A BURDEN FOR YOU TO CARRY?" THE YOUNG BOY REPLIED, "THAT'S NO BURDEN, SIR. IT'S MY BROTHER."

I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU TO TAKE THAT SAME ATTITUDE. HELP YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN SCHOOL. SAVE THEM. GET INVOLVED. RECOGNIZE WHEN YOUR FRIENDS ARE HAVING PROBLEMS --- AND ACT TO PREVENT THEM.

TOGETHER WE CAN SLOW --- AND I PRAY, STOP--- THE AWFUL TRAGEDY OF TEEN SUICIDE. OF LIVES CUT SHORT. OF DREAMS ENDED. OF PROMISE UNFULFILLED.

FACING UP TO THE PROBLEM OF TEENAGE SUICIDE IS NOT A BURDEN
--- IT IS AN IMPERATIVE. THIS YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM
IS ONE STEP --- A FIRST STEP.

BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT STEPS LIE WITH YOU --- STUDENTS,
TEACHERS. ADMINISTRATORS. MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS.
FRIENDS.

TOGETHER, WE CAN STOP TEEN SUICIDE. TOGETHER, WE MUST.

NEW JERSEY WILL BE TOO SAD A PLACE IF WE DON'T.

THANK YOU.