

ANC 3C Resolution 2022-0XX

RESOLUTION Regarding the Installation of Protective Bridge Barriers on William Howard Taft Bridge and Connecticut Avenue Bridge (aka Klinge Valley Bridge)

Whereas according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2020, suicide was the 12th leading cause of death for all ages in the United States, changing from the 10th leading cause in 2019 due to the emergence of COVID-19 deaths. As the second leading cause of death in people aged 10–34 and the fifth leading cause in people aged 35–54, suicide is a major contributor to premature mortality¹;

Whereas one of the most effective methods of preventing suicide is to give suicidal individuals and those who care for them something they desperately need: time. This includes time for the suicidal risk to diminish, time for the intense suicidal impulse to pass, or time for someone to intervene with mental health support and resources²;

Whereas barrier installation is a proven method of increasing this crucial time for individuals at risk for suicide by jumping. Barriers can be fashioned to areas of significant height that may pose a risk for a suicide attempt, such as bridges, cell towers, and parking garages. These barriers act as a delay and deterrent to an individual at risk, providing more time to get through the intense, often brief, moment of suicide crisis²;

Whereas an eight-foot-high antisuicide fence was installed on the Duke Ellington Bridge in 1986 resulting in a decrease in suicides³;

Whereas there was a plan to install antisuicide fencing on the William Howard Taft Bridge around 1986 that was delayed and subsequently abandoned;

Whereas one of the main reasons cited for opposition to a bridge barrier is a common misconception: that if an individual in crisis cannot access one method of suicide, such as a bridge, they will find another location or means. This misconception is known as the “method substitution effect” and does not match current evidence of suicidal behavior⁴. General research has found that individuals thwarted in utilizing a preferred method of

¹ Suicide Mortality in the United States, 2000–2020 Matthew F. Garnett, M.P.H., Sally C. Curtin, M.A., and Deborah M. Stone, Sc.D. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db433.pdf>.

² Means reduction saves lives. (2019). Means Matter. Retrieved from <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/saves-lives/>.

³ DUKE ELLINGTON BRIDGE SUICIDES DECLINE SINCE INSTALLATION OF FENCE, Linda Wheeler, March 23, 1987 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1987/03/23/duke-ellington-bridge-suicides-decline-since-in-stallation-of-fence/5bcf5c70-230a-466b-8c60-09b3edc4e090/>

⁴ Daigle, M.S. (2005). Suicide prevention through means restriction: Assessing the risk of substitution. A critical review and synthesis. *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 37(4): 625-632. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aap.2005.03.004>.

suicide do not seek alternative methods. Reisch et al. found that 62% of individuals would not choose another place to jump from after being deterred by a barrier⁵; therefore, be it

Resolved, that ANC 3C urges the Government of the District of Columbia to install protective bridge barriers on the William Howard Taft Bridge and Connecticut Avenue Bridge (aka Klingle Valley Bridge); and

Be it further resolved, that ANC 3C urges all relevant offices within the Government of the District of Columbia—including but not limited to the Mayor, DC Council, Attorney General, Department of Health, and Department of Transportation—communicate or continue to communicate to the general public that mental health services are available within the District of Columbia regardless of one's place of residence or citizenship, legal status of citizenship, race, age, ethnicity, income, gender identity, or religious credence or lack thereof; and

Be it further resolved, that ANC 3C urges DC Government to provide financial and logistical support to community organizations willing and able to provide safe travel to and from mental health service provider premises for individuals attempting to attain mental health services; and

Be it further resolved, that ANC 3C urges DC Council and the Mayor voice support for H.R. 792⁶, the Barriers to Suicide Act of 2021, in order to establish a grant program to facilitate the installation, on bridges, of evidence-based suicide deterrents, including suicide prevention nets and barriers, and for other purposes throughout the United States of America.

Be it resolved, that the Commission authorizes the Chair and the Commissioners for 3C03, 3Cxx... to represent the Commission on this matter.

⁵ Reisch, T., Schuster, U. & Michel, K. (2007). Suicide by jumping and accessibility of bridges: Results from a national survey in Switzerland. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 37(6), 681-687. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1521/suli.2007.37.6.681>.

⁶ Bill text accessed at <https://www.congress.gov/117/bills/hr792/BILLS-117hr792ih.pdf>