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## **BOSTON COUNCILOR SEEKS HEARING ON SUICIDE PREVENTION SERVICES**

As national suicide prevention month nears the end of its second week, Boston City Councilor Annissa Essaibi-George on Wednesday called for an examination on the effectiveness of mental health services in the area.

Essaibi-George, who chairs the City Council's Committee on Homelessness, Mental Health and Recovery, partnered with fellow councilor and Democratic nominee for Congress Ayanna Pressley to declare September as suicide prevention month in Boston. Essaibi-George also introduced an order calling for a hearing to examine mental health, substance abuse and suicide prevention services and their effectiveness in reaching Boston residents.

"Suicide continues to be a significant public health crisis, affecting individuals, families, friends and colleagues regardless of age, gender, race, orientation, income level, religion or background," Essaibi-George said.

Massachusetts ranked 48th in the nation in 2016 for rate of suicides, according to an American Association of Suicidology study cited Wednesday by Kelly Cunningham, director of the Massachusetts Suicide Prevention Program at the Department of Public Health, during the state Public Health Council meeting. In 2016, 631 deaths were attributed to suicide.

Cunningham announced the Department of Health plans to hold prevention trainings for its staff in the coming weeks, and there will be events announced statewide, including awareness walks and a screening of "The Ripple Effect."

Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S., claiming the lives of 123 Americans a day. "Suicide and self-inflicted injuries are a significant yet largely preventable public health problem," said Cunningham. - Chris Triunfo/SHNS

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