

*Memo from Leland Yee after a high school student's suicide*

Leland Yee  
Press Briefing  
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## **Protecting our Children from the Ultimate Tragedy**

Last week, the life of a promising high school student was cut tragically, irrevocably and desperately short; he committed suicide. How can it be that any child in our city becomes so lost and is in such despair that he takes his own life? How can it be that we, parents and teachers, friends and peers, missed the signs and provided no help? Where were the many support groups focused on adolescent health and well-being? Did no one notice? Most important, how can we keep this awful situation from happening again?

To answer some of these questions, and especially to ensure that we establish a more effective and proactive network to help our children, Supervisor Leland Yee has put forward a formal inquiry to the Directors of the Departments of Public Health, of Mental Health, and of Children's Mental Health. Within one month, these persons holding the highest responsibility in the health field in our City and County are to report not only on the services, structures and protocols which are presently in place to assist our children, but also on how these organizations and efforts can and must be improved so that all our children are supported. No child should ever feel such anguish and so lost, and so without anywhere to turn that he or she makes that worst possible of all decisions, and takes their own life.

Supervisor Yee, who himself has a Ph.D. in psychology, has further asked for details concerning the incidence of suicide and self-destructive behavior among teenage students, and the perceived causes of this behavior. He has requested information from the Director of Health and Mental Health concerning the roles of depression and stress in the behavior of teenage students, and how these effects may be mitigated or ameliorated. He has asked also for the Directors to consider how depression and stress may be manifested differently depending on cultural and ethnic differences, and to take these differences into consideration in their analysis of how the City and County can better assist and support teenage students.

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