



JAMES ARCIERO
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
2nd Middlesex District
Chelmsford, Littleton, Westford

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, MA 02133-1054

CHAIR
JOINT COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

STATE HOUSE, ROOM 146
TEL: (617) 722-2575
James.Arciero@mahouse.gov

Contact: Luke O’Roark

Email: luke.oroark@mahouse.gov

Phone: (617) 722-2575 (ext. 8626)

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ARCIERO HOSTS SUDC AWARENESS DAY, PUSHES FOR BEREAVEMENT LEAVE FOR GRIEVING FAMILIES

BOSTON – Junie Dillon’s smile was contagious, as was her soft hugs to make sure those around her were “appy.”

She was a ball of light, her mother, Kristen, recalled. Always cheerful – whether with her Nonna’s or at daycare – and the sounds of her laughter were constantly echoed throughout their Chelmsford home, the Dillon family said.

Junie died in 2022 at 2-and-a-half years old. Her death falls under the category of Sudden Unexplained Death in Childhood (SUDC), which is used when no clear cause of death is identified after a thorough case investigation.

“As a clinical psychologist working in hospice and palliative care, I thought I knew grief. But it was only after losing my daughter that I truly understood it,” said Kristen, PsyD, ABPP. “I pledged to Junie after she died that I’d move mountains for her. Doing things in her memory is one of the ways I stay connected to her.

Junie’s Place does just that, and it honors her value of always wanting to ‘help a friend.’ I like to think she’s proud that we are helping other families like ours,” Kristen added.

A bill filed by State Representative James Arciero this session, working alongside Junie’s Place and the SUDC Foundation, would help address families grieving the loss of their child to SUDC. The bill, HD. 3789, *An Act relative to bereavement leave for the loss of a child*, provides families 10 days of bereavement within one year of the death of their child a seemingly brief window of time in their family’s lifelong journey of healing.

“Families like the Dillons, and so many others who have unexpectedly lost children at a young age with no cause or explanation, it’s absolutely devastating. As a father my heart goes out to them,” Representative Arciero said. “This legislation I have filed is vital to not only about getting more services, awareness and research around these devastating tragedies, but to also provide dignity and time for families dealing with this.”

Representative Arciero hosted a SUDC Awareness Day Monday to help bring awareness to the issue that affects families across Massachusetts and kick off SUDC Awareness month.

The occasion included an official proclamation to establish March as “SUDC Awareness Month,” a presentation from Representative Arciero, speakers and families affected by the tragic occurrences and resources for families grieving.

“After Junie died, I was incapacitated,” Kristen said. “I nested at my mother’s house in an oversized chair and scoured my phone for answers, resources, and to find others like me. In doing so, I found that resources were sorely lacking and also that diamonds like the SUDC Foundation existed. There, I learned I was not alone, and I made vital connections to others.”

"The SUDC Foundation is grateful for the proclamation in Massachusetts recognizing March as SUDC Awareness Month, a time to honor the 40 children gone too soon and the 62 Massachusetts family members forever affected by SUDC," SUDC Foundation Executive Director Tina Yun Lee said. “This month serves as a poignant reminder of the profound and lifelong impact of child loss, not only on families but on entire communities. By raising awareness, we shine a light on SUDC while fostering a compassionate space where families can find support, understanding, and hope. We extend our sincere gratitude to Representative James Arciero for his dedication and advocacy on behalf of SUDC families.

Together, we can ensure that children are remembered and that families receive the time, space, and support they need to grieve and heal. Recognizing bereavement leave is not just about policy. It is about compassion, dignity, and acknowledging the enduring impact of losing a child. No family should have to navigate this journey alone." Lee added.

The SUDC Foundation is the only organization worldwide whose purpose is to raise awareness, fund research, and serve families and those affected by SUDC. The SUDC Foundation provides all services at no cost to the people it serves. To learn more about the SUDC Foundation, visit SUDC.org.

Junie's Place is a compassionate nonprofit organization dedicated to providing comprehensive, no-cost grief support services to families enduring the profound loss of a child, infant, pregnancy, or experiencing a stillbirth. To learn more, visit juniesplace.org.

XXX