



Volunteer Testimony

SB 646- SUPPORT
Child Access Prevention Public Safety - Access to Firearms - Storage Requirements
Jaxon O'Mara
Senate Judicial Proceeding Committee
February 20, 2020

Dear Mr. Chairman Smith and Members of The Committee,

Hello. My name is Jaxon O'Mara and I am here today to ask the committee to support SB646 to change the restrictions on child access to firearms. I have seen many of you before, just a few weeks ago when students from all across Maryland came to your offices and asked for your support on this legislation. I am the State Director of March For Our Lives Maryland as well as a first-year student at St. Mary's College. I work directly with students all across our state to coordinate and make our voices heard on both the state and national level. As an organizer for March For Our Lives, gun violence is my top issue and the subject that I spent all of my free time working on. However, this work is more than just advocacy to me. Gun violence prevention is personal. On February 14th, 2018, I watched as students ran for their lives in Parkland, Florida. 17 People were killed that day at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. I watched in horror and thanked my lucky stars that my community didn't have to go through anything like that. It turns out that my stars weren't so lucky. Just 5 weeks later, on March 20th, 2018, my community became the newest addition to a long list of deadly school shootings. A student entered my school with his father's glock and fatally shot my classmate, Jaelynn Willey, and wounded another before killing himself. Under current Maryland law, the shooter's access to the firearm

was legal. As a 17-year-old, his parents were not violating any law by allowing him unrestricted access to their firearm. I am asking the committee to vote on and pass HB636 to raise the age of access to 18 as well as close other loopholes that exist within this bill. No 16 or 17 year old should have this kind of dangerous, unrestricted access to a firearm and no other community should have to go through what mine did. By not changing this law, Maryland is choosing to continue to let communities like mine be torn apart by the gun violence epidemic. Jaelynn Willey should be celebrating her 18th birthday this coming Monday. She should be heading to the polls this November for the very first time, but all of that was stripped away from her. Don't let this happen to another family, another community, another school. Please support and encourage each and every one of your colleagues to support HB636. Thank you.