

Written Testimony of Jesse Ferguson, resident of Caroline County, Maryland in Opposition to SB0646

I am a hard-working husband, father of two young girls, and a native of Maryland's Eastern Shore. I am also an avid hunter, firearms collector, and participant in all manners of competition involving shooting and firearms. I am opposed to SB0646 and urge an unfavorable report from the committee. This bill proports to be a solution to a number of issues:

- deaths of children due to school shootings
- suicide by children with a firearm
- deaths of children due to firearms accidents

However, the bill narrowly focuses on the storage of firearms within the home instead of taking into account the broader issues that are at the root of most of these tragedies.

Firearms Accidents

Law-abiding owners of firearms want to be safe and responsible. The firearm industry itself has had a tremendously positive affect on the number of fatal firearm accidents. According to CDC data, there has been a 38% decline between the years 2005 and 2018. The number of children who die due to fatal firearm accidents is at the lowest rate ever recorded.

Child Suicide

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for children between the age of 1-17. However, the leading method of suicide employed is suffocation, not firearms:

identify students in distress before their behavior escalates to the level of eliciting concerns about safety.

A key finding in regard to weapons (emphasis added):

Most attackers used firearms, and firearms were most often acquired from the home:

Many of the attackers were able to access firearms from the home of their parents or another close relative. *While many of the firearms were unsecured, in several cases the attackers were able to gain access to firearms that were secured in a locked gun safe or case. It should be further noted, however, that some attackers used knives instead of firearms to perpetrate their attacks.* Therefore, a threat assessment should explore if a student has access to any weapons, with a particular focus on weapons access at home. Schools, parents, and law enforcement must work together rapidly to restrict access to weapons in those cases when students pose a risk of harm to themselves or others.

Again, there is a root cause in these tragic events is not simply access to firearms or other weapons. An intent to do harm to others is not eliminated when access to firearms is prevented.

Source: <https://www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/ussc-analysis-of-targeted-school-violence.pdf>

SB0646 turns Maryland's existing firearm storage requirements into a vaguely worded, overly broad trap for law-abiding firearm owners. It offers no solutions to the root issues at play with the various situations where lives are tragically lost.

Again, I urge the committee to return an unfavorable report on this bill.

Sincerely,

Jesse Ferguson