



February 20, 2020

Senate Bill 646

Public Safety - Access to Firearms - Storage Requirements

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Anne Arundel County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 646 - Public Safety - Access to Firearms - Storage Requirements. This Bill modifies and expands the prohibition on a storing or leaving a loaded or unloaded firearm in a location where the person knew or should have known that an unsupervised minor could gain access to the firearm and alters the misdemeanor penalty for a violation of the prohibition.

Firearms are the 3rd leading cause of death for youth under 18. Of the 1,814 firearm related deaths nationwide in 2017, 40% were suicides and 51% homicides (the rest were deemed unintentional, undetermined, or resulting from legal intervention). Studies of adolescent and adult suicides have generally found that those who died by firearm suicide lived in homes where guns were less securely stored.

The State Office of the Medical Examiner reported 209 deaths in Anne Arundel County from guns between the years 2013 to 2017. Of those deaths, 67 percent were ruled suicides, 30 percent were homicides, and 2 percent were accidental. The presence of unlocked guns in the home increases the risk of both accidental and intentional gun injuries. With respect to youth suicides, approximately 80% of the time the owner of the firearm was either a parent or another relative.

To begin our work to decrease these incidents of gun violence in our communities, Anne Arundel County formed a Gun Violence Prevention Task Force to research potential solutions. The task force released a preliminary report in December 2019 with a range of recommendations under four pillars. House Bill 636 falls under two of those pillars, "Intervene Before Gun Violence Occurs" and "Support Gun Safety Measures at Every Level of Government." One of the recommendations was to support legislation that limits access to firearms by minors. The presence of unlocked guns in the home increases the risk of both accidental and intentional gun injuries and a May 2019 study determined that improvement in firearm storage practices could reduce youth firearm deaths between 6 and 32 percent. This legislation takes an important step in strengthening firearms storage laws in order to decrease minors' access to firearms.

Accordingly, Anne Arundel County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on Senate Bill 646.