

**Written Testimony: Greta Willis—Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America
SB 626/HB139
February 1, 2021**

Dear Chairman, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Greta Willis, mother of Kevin Cooper and Co-Founder and President of the Kevin L. Cooper Foundation created in my son's name. I am also a volunteer with the Maryland Chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America.

Let me explain to you why I am here today. On Saturday, August 12, 2006, my 14-year-old son was shot and killed by an inexperienced Baltimore City police officer with one year on the force. My son was experiencing a mental health crisis. I called the police seeking help for my son. Instead of receiving help, my son, while holding a plastic dustpan, was maced and shot, in my home, in front of me, as I was holding my 10-month-old granddaughter.

There were two officers on the scene, and the one officer left stating, "the call was abated," meaning it was over. The other officer stayed and antagonized my son... then shot and killed him. Think: if the officer was in danger, why did his partner leave a rookie still on the scene alone?

I was never given an opportunity to accompany my son to the hospital. Two detectives instructed me to go right then to the police station to make a statement. Then I would be allowed to be with my son. I had pleaded with the officer numerous times to exit the premises. He chose to stay and escalate the situation. He became the judge, jury and executioner of Kevin's life. There were no criminal charges placed against the officer.

Kevin was a brother, son, uncle and a friend. He had just completed his first summer employment with Youth Works. My daughter was overseas fighting for our country, and someone who is paid to protect and serve the community was murdering her brother in his home.

There is no police accountability in Baltimore City Police Department even now. If the department would have investigated our case a little further, instead of covering up and declaring on the same day of the shooting that it was a JUSTIFIABLE HOMICIDE. Please explain to me how can you justify a homicide that had just occurred at 9:30 am? On the same day it occurred? Impossible! Where is the investigation? Where is the transparency?

It is too late for my son, but as a mother and grandmother, I am here. As George Floyd cried out for his mother, I am here crying out in representation for my only child, grandchildren and all the sons and daughters. I urge you all to prohibit the deadly use of force so our children can live.

Police violence is gun violence. We cannot end gun violence without addressing this crisis.

I urge the Committee to vote and make changes. We need police reform and accountability.

Thank you for your time.