



**2023 SESSION  
POSITION PAPER**

**BILL:** SB 858 – Firearm Safety – Storage Requirements and Youth Suicide Prevention (Jaelynn’s Law)

**COMMITTEE:** House Judiciary Committee

**POSITION:** Letter of Information

**BILL ANALYSIS:** SB 858 would alter prohibition on reckless endangerment, alter a provision related to the storage of firearms and ammunition in a location that can be accessed by an unsupervised child, prohibit the storage of firearms and ammunition in a manner that allows access by certain persons, require the Deputy Secretary for Public Health Services to develop a youth suicide prevention and firearms safe storage guide, and other related actions.

**POSITION RATIONALE:** The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) provides a letter of information for SB 858. Health Officers appreciate advancing safe firearm storage practices. However, allowing access to loaded firearms to minors through various exceptions, undermines the intent for preventing firearm access.

We ask the Judiciary Committee to **reconsider** the following section of SB 858 found on **Page 6, Lines 1-12:**

(3) SUBSECTION (A)(3) OF THIS SECTION DOES NOT APPLY IF:

(I) THE MINOR ACCESSES A FIREARM FOR SELF-DEFENSE OR THE DEFENSE OF OTHERS AGAINST A TRESPASSER INTO THE RESIDENCE OF THE MINOR OR INTO A RESIDENCE IN WHICH THE MINOR IS AN INVITED GUEST; OR

(II) 1. THE FIREARM IS A SHOTGUN OR A RIFLE;

2. THE MINOR IS NOT OTHERWISE PROHIBITED FROM POSSESSING A FIREARM UNDER STATE OR FEDERAL LAW; AND

3. A. THE MINOR HAS A CERTIFICATE OF FIREARM AND HUNTER SAFETY ISSUED UNDER § 10-301.1 OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES ARTICLE; OR

B. THE MINOR HAS PERMISSION FROM THE MINOR’S PARENT OR GUARDIAN WHO IS AT LEAST 18 YEARS OLD TO ACCESS THE FIREARM;

Firearm injuries are the leading cause of death for youth ages 0-19 in the U.S.<sup>1</sup> About a third of children live in homes with firearms, and 43% of these households contain at least 1 unlocked firearm.<sup>2</sup>

---

615 North Wolfe Street, Room E 2530 // Baltimore, Maryland 21205 // 410-937-1433

---

<sup>1</sup><https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/149/3/e2021052739/184887/Pediatric-Firearm-Injury-Mortality-Epidemiology>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/state-advocacy/safe-storage-of-firearms/>

The above noted section of SB 858 would:

1. Potentially allow easy access to a loaded firearm by a minor. This is concerning as youth suicides using firearms are increasing<sup>3</sup>. Studies show that preventing access to loaded firearms decreases suicide among young people<sup>4</sup>; four-fifths of youth firearm suicides use a gun belonging to a family member.<sup>5</sup>
2. Have the unintended consequence of promoting minor access to loaded firearms for “self-defense”. Most purported self-defense gun uses are gun uses in escalating arguments, and guns in the home are used more often to intimidate intimates than deter crime. <sup>6</sup>

For these reasons, the Maryland Association of County Health Officers submits this letter of information for SB 858. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at [rmaiora1@jhu.edu](mailto:rmaiora1@jhu.edu) or 410-937-1433.

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-rise-of-firearm-suicide-among-young-americans/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/child-access-prevention/suicide.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3085447/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/hicrc/firearms-research/gun-threats-and-self-defense-gun-use-2/>