

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 858
Firearm Safety – Storage Requirements and Youth Suicide Prevention
(Jaelynn’s Law)**

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President**

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 858, Jaelynn’s Law. This much needed legislation imposes common sense measures to ensure guns are safely and securely stored to prevent negligent or intentional life threatening harm. The bill also requires the Deputy Secretary for Public Health Services to develop a youth suicide prevention and firearm safe storage guide. The guide will describe the firearm and ammunition safe storage requirements, identify risks associated with unsafe firearm storage for minors, and highlight best practices to safely store firearms and ammunition. The guide will be made publicly available and distributed to a variety of actors, including the Maryland State Department of Education and local school systems. The bill also appropriates funding to enable grants to local school systems, health departments, and non-profit agencies to support the education of families on recommended safe storage practices.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland’s public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Gun violence continues to wreak havoc across our nation and across our state. For too long, and too often, senseless gun violence has robbed Marylanders of their loved ones. Families, schools, and communities continue to be devastated and shattered by the unimaginable high number of lives taken from gun violence, whether these acts were accidental or intentional.



Everyone should be alarmed by the statistics and research connected to this issue. Fifty-four percent of gun owners do not securely store all of their guns.¹ Approximately 350 children under the age of 18 shoot themselves or somebody else on an annual basis.² Across the U.S., nearly 4.6 million children live in a home that has at least one unlocked and loaded firearm.³ In 105 cases of school shootings where the source of the weapon was identified, eighty percent of the weapons used were taken from the child's home or those of relatives or friends.⁴ These conditions are unacceptable and contribute to the unnecessary loss of life every day across our nation and across our state.

Lawmakers in Maryland have the chance to enact common sense gun safety legislation that will save countless lives and make our communities safer. States and cities across the country are enacting responsible measures to curb the spread of gun violence and reduce the number of lives lost to senseless tragedies.⁵ We urge the committee not to pass on the opportunity to save additional lives and immediately pass this critical legislation.

We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on Senate Bill 858.

¹ Cassandra K. Crifasi, et al., *Storage Practices of US Gun Owners in 2016*, Am. J. Public Health (Apr. 2018), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5844398/pdf/AJPH.2017.304262.pdf>.

² Everytown for Gun Safety. “#NotAnAccident Index”. *Everytown for Gun Safety*. (2019). everytownresearch.org/notanaccident.

³ Matthew Miller and Deborah Azrael, *Firearm Storage in US Households with Children: Findings from the 2021 National Firearm Survey*, JAMA Network Open 5, no. 2 (2022), <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2789269>.

⁴ John Woodrow and Steven Rich, ‘*The gun’s not in the closet*,’ The Washington Post (Aug. 1, 2018), https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/local/wp/2018/08/01/feature/school-shootings-should-parents-be-charged-for-failing-to-lock-up-guns-used-by-their-kids/?utm_term=.ec4e148350a5.

⁵ See Everytown for Gun Safety, *Secure Gun Storage*, (compiling recent legislative efforts by states and cities to enact secure storage gun safety measures), <https://www.everytown.org/solutions/responsible-gun-storage/#by-the-numbers> (last visited 2/11/2023).