



February 20, 2023

Bill: Senate Bill 858– Firearm Safety – Storage Requirements and Youth Suicide Prevention (Jaelynn’s Law)

Position: Support

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland School Psychologists’ Association (MSPA), a professional organization representing about 500 school psychologists in Maryland. We advocate for the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic wellbeing of students and families across the state.

We support Senate Bill 858 which strengthen storage requirements of firearms, and also creates and disseminates materials to prevent youth suicide as a result of firearm usage. The American Association of Suicidology report that gun ownership, even when controlling for depression, substance use, suicidal thoughts, poverty, education, access to care, religion, and many other factors, is strongly correlated with suicide rates by state. Individuals are five times more likely to die by suicide when there is a firearm in their home, especially when firearms are not stored safely. Firearms are the most common method of suicide; firearms result in death in 85-95% of suicide attempts.

We must keep our students safe. The National Association of School Psychologists and Maryland School Psychologists’ Association supports legislation that eliminates youth access to firearms and improves awareness of gun safety practices. In fact, firearms are now the leading cause of death for children under 19. Six out of every ten firearm-related deaths are suicides. Senate Bill 858 would keep Maryland’s students safe and prioritize preventative programs to prevent youth suicide.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB 858. If we can provide any further information or be of assistance, please contact us at legislative@mspaonline.org or Sarah Peters at speters@hbstrategies.us or 410-322-2320.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Phipps, M.Ed., Ed.S., NCSP
Committee Chair, Legislative Committee
Maryland School Psychologists’ Association.