



Maryland
Hospital Association

February 20, 2023

To: The Honorable [William C. Smith Jr.](#), Chair, [Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee](#)

Re: [Letter of Support- Senate Bill 858- Firearm Safety- Storage Requirements and Youth Suicide Prevention \(Jaelynn's Law\)](#)

Dear Chair [Smith](#):

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill 858. According to the nonprofit [Gun Violence Archive](#), 865 Maryland children under 17 have been killed or injured in a gun-related incident since 2014. Further, according to [The Baltimore Sun](#), one in eight victims of gun violence brought to a Baltimore-area hospital is a child.

The presence of unlocked guns in the home increases the risk of both accidental and intentional gun injuries. Between 2009 and 2018, gun suicides of minors increased by 82%.¹ In approximately 80% of these cases, the owner of the firearm was either a parent or another relative.²

Safe Storage and Child Access Prevention (CAP) laws permit authorities to charge adults who, knowingly or through negligent behaviors, fail to properly secure their firearms when the gun owner is not in immediate control of their weapon. There are no CAP laws at the federal level and no other types of federal laws mandating safe storage. Maryland's CAP law provides little guidance, negates the adult gun owner's responsibility when older children are involved, and has only minor consequences for violations. SB 858 will improve Maryland's law and save lives by specifying guns and ammunition need to be locked, expanding the scope of the law to include children as young as 15, and creating and funding a youth suicide prevention outreach program.

For these reasons, we request a *favorable* report on SB 858.

For more information, please contact:

Nicole Stallings, Executive Vice President and Chief External Affairs Officer
Nstallings@mhaonline.org

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS), "Fatal Injury Reports," last accessed June 26, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars>. Calculations include children ages 10–17.

² Renee M. Johnson, PhD, MPH, Catherine Barber, MPA, Deborah Azrael, PhD, David E. Clark, MD, and David Hemenway, PhD, "Who are the owners of firearms used in adolescent suicides?" *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior* (December 2010)