

GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON SUICIDE PREVENTION

Henry J. Meiser – Student Commissioner

Term: October 2021 to July 2023

TO: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

RE: Senate Bill 858 – Firearm Safety – Storage Requirements and Youth Suicide Prevention (Jaelyn's Law)

POSITION: Favorable With Amendment

Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

My name is Henry J. Meiser, and I have had the pleasure of serving as the Student Commissioner to the Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention since 2021, and my subsequent reappointment in 2023 by the Moore-Miller Administration. In this role, I represent all 900,00+ primary and secondary school students within the State of Maryland. While not here to testify on behalf of the commission as a whole, I am here to testify in my capacity as the Student Commissioner in favor, with amendment for Senate Bill 858.

SB 858 seeks to amend certain provisions of the Maryland Annotated Code, specifically by amending §4-104 of the Criminal Provision of the Code and by adding to §13-39A of the Health Article of the Code. These provisions hold gun owners accountable for the safe storage of firearms in our State. It supports important firearm safety precautions, all of which go to protect our young people

However, the bill also proposes a stakeholder review committee, charged with providing recommendations on a youth suicide prevention and firearm safety guide. This "stakeholder" committee does not include student representation. While it does include a spot at the table for "youth advocates", it does not specifically allow a young person a seat at the table, and therefore, their voice to be heard. Young people are more than capable of articulating their views and are without a question a stakeholder in this matter.

Students carry invaluable insight to the creation of this guide, allowing to reach its target audience (students) and objectives much more effectively.

We rely on young people to represent the views of their peers on many boards, commissions, and task forces across the State (myself being one), so why can we not provide them a venue to share their thoughts on a guide, which is being developed for them? I also believe that we are not in need of another commission

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to conduct this review. The Governor’s Commission is full of stakeholders, subject-matter experts, and is already full of connections and existing resources.

There is no question that SB 858 is a great piece of legislation to help and protect our young people. However, it is my contention that, a panel of stakeholders who are charged with providing insight on a youth-related guide must include youth – they are the MOST important stakeholder in this process without question.

It is for this reason that I urge this committee to produce a favorable report on SB 858, pending appropriate adoption of one of the two following amendments:

- (1) That §2(b) of SB 858 be amended, such that the Governor’s Commission on Suicide Prevention be charged with the review of aforementioned youth guide; or,
- (2) That §2(b) of SB 858 be amended, such that there is at least one (1) position for a young person (below 18) which resides in the State of Maryland.

Most Respectfully,



Henry J. Meiser
Student Commissioner
**Gov.’s Commission on
Suicide Prevention**