

Written Testimony for SB 858

Dear Hon. Will Smith and Jeff Waldstreicher,

My name is Sarah Edwards and I am a board-certified child and adolescent psychiatrist at the University of Maryland Medical Center and I am writing to support SB 8585 Firearm Safety. Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among youth ages 10-24 and we know that many suicide attempts happen with little planning during a short-term crisis. The means of a suicide attempt matter; firearms are the most lethal among suicide methods.

Please consider two case examples:

There is a 14-year-old boy who has been feeling down over the past several months due to school and family stressors. He was upset that despite studying for his midterm he received a low grade and he also learned that his girlfriend cheated on him. He became distressed and overwhelmed by intense feelings of failure and disappointment. He went to his father's nightstand and overdosed on his dad's blood pressure medications. His parent found him and took him to the hospital where he received medical and psychiatric care

Now imagine the exact same case except when the youth's intense feelings of failure and disappointment overwhelmed him, he went to his father's nightstand and didn't overdose on medications. Instead, he took his father's gun and shot himself. He was taken to the hospital where he received medical care but suffered fatal wounds.

Reducing access to lethal means of self-harm saves lives. Families, organizations, and policymakers must take action to reduce access to lethal means and Senate Bill 858 supports important firearm safety precautions.

Thank you



Sarah Edwards, DO

