



## SENATE BILL 0858

Firearm Safety-Storage Requirements and Youth Suicide Prevention-Jaelynn's Law

RICH GIBSON, HOWARD COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY

**POSITION: FAVORABLE**

March 28, 2023

My name is Rich Gibson, I am the State's Attorney for Howard County and have been a prosecutor for nineteen years. Part of my obligations as State's Attorney is to advocate for laws that enhance the safety and well-being of our community; that is the reason I am writing today to offer my support for SB 0858.

This bill, if passed, will enhance public safety by creating a regulatory structure designed to promote the safe storage of deadly firearms. The combination of an unsupervised minor or a prohibited person and a readily accessible, highly lethal firearm is a catastrophe waiting to happen. It is foreseeable that a young individual lacking an appreciation for the lethality of guns and the potential permanence of the consequences associated with the improper handling and usage of a gun, could make choices with lasting devastating impacts. Moreover, people convicted of disqualifying crimes have previously engaged in an action that displays they are not responsible enough to lawfully possess firearms. Suicides, homicides, and non-fatal shootings are preventable, if we are willing to put in place the proper restrictions to limit access to lethal weapons. This bill goes a long way in furtherance of that goal.

One issue that has been raised in advance is whether prosecutors will pursue charges against family members who improperly store weapons and access to those weapons by a minor leads to a self-inflicted injury or suicide. Prosecutors are elected by the local communities they serve because those local

communities trust our judgment. We will assess each incident on a case-by-case basis and bring charges where appropriate.

We greatly appreciate that a conviction under this new law will be considered a disqualifying crime—that is an amendment we offered in previous testimony and we are pleased to see it has been incorporated into this latest draft of the bill.

For these reasons, **I respectfully request a favorable report on SENATE BILL 0858 as it currently stands.**