

Testimony in Support of SB 858 - Firearms Safe Storage/Jaelynn's Law

TO: Delegate Luke Clippinger, Chair and Members of the Judiciary Committee
FROM: Laticia Hicks, Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland
DATE: March 30, 2023

As a retired Federal Law Enforcement Officer, I understand the necessity of legitimate gun ownership for trained individuals who accept the responsibility and obligation to protect life and serve in the interest of public safety. I am also the mother of two teenage boys and I am appalled and deeply concerned, no, scared, for my children's safety.

According to the CDC, everyday more than 110 Americans are killed by guns. In Maryland, 62% of gun deaths are by firearm homicide, 83% of all gun deaths among children and teens are homicides and 16% of those are suicides. While the rate of suicide saw an overall decrease between 2019-2021 during that same time it increased for African-American and Hispanic youths. The rate of gun deaths has increased 46% from 2011 to 2020 in Maryland, compared to a 33% increase nationwide. These numbers are frightening and very frustrating, especially knowing these deaths are preventable.

I know the importance of gun safety and practicing safe storage. Unfortunately, the presence of a gun often creates a permanent solution to what is often a temporary problem. I don't want to rob my children of having a normal childhood by keeping them from being with their friends. However, I don't want someone's negligence to put my child in danger, either as a victim or perpetrator of gun violence. Responsible adults need to help young people in crisis, not enable them to shoot their friends unintentionally.

I urge you to vote for this bill and others like SB 858- Firearms Safe Storage- Jaelynn's Law that strengthen Maryland's gun violence prevention laws and help to strengthen our sense of safety.

Sincerely,

Laticia Hicks