



**Board of Education of Howard County  
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland House of Delegates,  
Judiciary Committee  
March 30, 2023**

**Board of Education  
of Howard County**

**SB0858: FAVORABLE  
Firearm Safety - Storage Requirements and Youth Suicide Prevention  
(Jaelynn's Law)**

Antonia Watts, *Chair*

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Jacky McCoy

Jolene Mosley

Abisola Ayoola  
*Student Member*

Michael J. Martirano, Ed.D.  
*Superintendent  
Secretary/Treasurer*

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **SB0858 Firearm Safety - Storage Requirements and Youth Suicide Prevention (Jaelynn's Law)** in alignment with its Legislative Platform. Since 2020, the Board has advocated for sensible gun reform to reduce access for students and minors to firearms and weapons, and to promote the use of gun locks and sensible screening methods.

Since that time, school shootings have continued to dominate media headlines, including recently at elementary schools in Uvalde, Texas and Newport News, Virginia. According to a [January 2022 article from Education Week](#) "There have been 27 school shootings this year. There have been 119 school shootings since 2018, when *Education Week* began tracking such incidents. The highest number of shootings, 34, occurred in 2021. There were 10 shootings in 2020, and 24 each in 2019 and 2018." A [study of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) morality data released in May 2022 also indicated, as of 2020, firearms are the leading cause of death among children in the U.S.

Under existing Criminal Law Article §4-104 "A person may not store or leave a loaded firearm in a location where the person knew or should have known that an unsupervised child would gain access to the firearm." SB0858 is a reintroduction of a measure that has repeatedly attempted to expand this prohibition beyond the age of 16 and require stronger storage and lock provisions.

Going beyond the criminal aspect of the bill, SB0858 includes the development of a youth suicide prevention and firearm safe storage guide by the Deputy Secretary for Public Health Services. Unfortunately, a requirement for funding in the form of an annual \$1 million dollar grant made available to local school systems, local health departments, and nonprofit entities to support the education of families on the safe storage practices recommended in the guide was removed before passage by the Senate. HCPSS Behavioral Health Services staff and the Board supports both the guide as well as the bill's original inclusion of funding to spread awareness among local school systems and parents on these pivotal issues impacting student health and safety.

For these reasons, we urge a FAVORABLE report of SB0858 from this Committee.