

Testimony of Mindy Landau  
Before the Maryland House Judiciary Committee  
Support for SB 858 [FAV]

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon and distinguished members of the Maryland House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Mindy Landau.

I am a retired federal employee with 40 years of service. My family and I have lived and worked in Montgomery County all our lives. There is nothing more important than their safety, and the safety of all our family and friends. SB 858 will encourage responsible gun storage, and save lives by expanding Maryland's existing child access prevention law to ensure that fewer minors can access firearms. Shockingly, a 2018 study found that only one third of parents are storing guns locked and unloaded nationwide, leading to a crisis of unintentional shootings amongst minors in the home. And while many parents think that their kids don't know where their guns are or how to access them – the available data unfortunately shows otherwise. About 70% of kids report knowing where guns were in their household, and 1 in 5 parents who reported their child had never handled the household firearm were contradicted by their child.

We know that a vast majority – about three quarters – of firearms used in unintentional shootings, school shootings, and self-harm by minors are acquired from their home, or from the homes of friends or relatives. It's easy to read the statistics, but we must recognize the lives behind that data.

For the five most recent years for which data is available, 35 minors in Maryland used a firearm to take their own life, and almost 90 were murdered with a firearm. In just five short years, we've lost over 100 young lives that were snuffed out by guns before they had an opportunity to begin. Similarly, data from the courts gives us a glimpse into many more cases where harm may have not resulted but where negligent storage practices resulted in the unlawful access of a firearm by a child or teen – In FY 2019, Maryland courts logged over 150 violations under the current child access prevention law, and in FY 2020, there were another 90.

Gun violence is now the leading cause of death in children in America today. Will that be our legacy? Our will we step up for our children and grandchildren and actually do something about the scourge of gun violence in our lives? What we know is that a large percentage of gun deaths can be prevented with safe storage regulations. Research consistently shows that in states with strong gun safety laws, minors experience significant reductions in firearm fatalities when compared to states with no such regulations. This law will ensure that our children will be protected across the state.

I urge a favorable report on this bill. Thank you.