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Miller Senate Office Building, 2 East
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 20, 2023

RE: Bill: SB 858 – Firearm Safety – Storage Requirements and Youth Suicide Prevention (Jaelynn’s Law)

Position: Support

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

The Maryland Psychological Association (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral-level psychologists from throughout the state, is writing in SUPPORT of SB 858 – Firearm Safety – Storage Requirements and Youth Suicide Prevention.

With the onset of the recent pandemic, anxiety and stress has increased for all age groups, but particularly for children. Sadly, suicide has become a leading cause of death for young people. Between 2009 and 2018, gun suicides of minors increased by 82%. With respect to youth suicides by firearms, approximately 80% of the time the owner of the firearm was either a parent or another relative.

Not only do children harm themselves, but they can harm others when firearms are not stored safely. The recent shooting of a teacher in nearby Virginia is an example.

Unintentional youth access to guns is preventable. Modest improvements in firearm storage practice can significantly reduce youth firearm deaths, and laws preventing children’s access to guns are associated with significant reductions of suicides by guns. Reasonable safety requirements for firearm storage make sense. We are also pleased to see that part of this bill includes the development and distribution of educational materials regarding firearm safety. For these reasons, the Maryland Psychological Association asks for a **FAVORABLE report on Senate Bill 858**.

Thank you for considering our comments on SB 858. If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact MPA’s Legislative Chair, Dr. Pat Savage at mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Resnik, Psy.D.
Rebecca Resnick, Psy.D.
President

R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.
R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Richard Bloch, Esq., Counsel for Maryland Psychological Association
Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs