

Testimony in Support of- HB 426-  
Public Schools-Active shooter Safety Drills or Trainings-Requirements

To:Delegate Atterbeary,Chair Ways and Means Committee

From:Carys Gill

Date:February 7,2024

My name is Carys Gill, and I am a resident of Silver Spring, Montgomery County, Maryland. I currently am a sophomore at Elizabeth Seton High School in Prince George's County, MD, and I am standing in support of bill HB-426 for the issue of active shooter drills being ineffective and harmful to the students and staff.

Throughout my time in school, I have unfortunately had to endure lockdown situations where the school was closed down without proper alerting procedures. One particularly distressing incident occurred last year when our school went into lockdown due to a nearby shooting. Instead of transparently alerting everyone about the situation, they confined us to a room and neglected to inform future 8th graders that came into the building about it. The lack of communication during this event heightened my fear, and sitting in my schools auditorium waiting for an announcement on what we were supposed to do was an experience I would not wish upon anyone.

In middle school, we frequently had lockdown drills for safety, and these drills proved to be a source of anxiety for my classmates who were survivors of gun violence. Witnessing their distress and the fear for their lives, which lingered for days after the drills, made it evident that the current approach to lockdown drills can be more harmful than helpful. My school has fire drills but and when asked what we do in case of an active shooter on campus, I have been told my teachers and administration to jump out of the window and run. Even if we're on the second or third floor and an injury can be caused from jumping out of the window. The fear of an active shooter on campus is one of my schools last worries and because of that we do not have adequate training and rules in place in case there is an actual threat. Although I go to a private school I hope that the rules about lockdown drills change in the public school system so that my school can change the way they are oriented as well.

I strongly believe that lockdown drills currently do more harm than good and are ineffective in effectively preparing for and controlling mass shootings in schools. I believe that the schools should announce a drill to students and parents at least the day before. Simulating an actual lockdown drill retraumatized other gun violence survivors like my friends and classmates. Schools must develop trauma-informed and evidence

based active shooter drills without hurting the school community.I stand in support of Bill HB426. I urge you to consider the emotional toll these drills can take on students and to reassess the methods employed in ensuring school safety.

Thank you for your time and consideration.