

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB0189 / HB0034 Mason's Law: Storm Drain Inlet Requirements

TO: The Honorable Members of the Maryland General Assembly

FROM: Terresa Kellogg, Reisterstown, MD

DATE: January 30, 2026

POSITION: FAVORABLE

To the Chairs and Members of the Committee:

My name is Terresa Kellogg, and I am a resident of Reisterstown. I am writing to you today with a heavy heart, not just as a citizen, but as an aunt who is mourning the preventable death of her 13-year-old nephew, Mason Kearns. I urge a **favorable report** on **SB0189/HB0034**, known as **Mason's Law**.

On July 31, 2025, my 13-year-old nephew, Mason Kearns, was killed by an **unguarded 17-inch storm drain** just feet from his front door. At 5'6" and 180 pounds, Mason was not a small child; he was nearly the size of a grown man.

A Predictable Tragedy, Not an Accident. It is vital to understand that Mason was not "playing" in a drain. Because of poor maintenance, the 17-inch drain was completely hidden by grass and debris. When a retention pond overflowed after a summer storm, the yard flooded. Mason went out with his older brother to investigate the water that had accumulated in his yard, dipped his toe into what looked like a large but shallow puddle, and was instantly sucked under and vacuum-sealed into the pipe by the immense pressure.

His brother instantly grabbed ahold of the limbs he could see, an arm and a leg, and frantically pulled before running to grab his mother to help. Neighbors showed up to help as did first responders, but the fight to free Mason took too long. Because of **the lack of a simple \$100 grate**, Mason died of positional asphyxiation.

The Family Impact. Mason was inseparable from his brother, Clay, who is now suffering from profound post-traumatic stress. Trauma like that is something no adult should have to endure, let alone a teenager who will grapple with this for the rest of his life. Our entire family is shattered. While all death is tragic, the violent and preventable nature of this loss

is particularly hard to bear. We are deeply saddened and miss the light, laughter, and smiles he shared.

The Solution is Simple. We often hear that such tragedies are "freak accidents." They are not. Between 2014 and 2020, at least 36 people in the U.S. died in similar drainage incidents. We are smarter than our aging infrastructure. We know the physics of these "**suction traps**," and we know how to fix them.

There is no excuse for a 17-inch opening—large enough to swallow an adult—to remain unguarded in a residential area. Mason's Law is a common-sense safety measure that ensures basic precautions are no longer "recommendations," but requirements.

I respectfully request a **favorable report** on SB0189/HB0034, Mason's Law. Let his legacy be the safety of every other child in Maryland.

Sincerely,

Terresa Kellogg Reisterstown, MD