

**Testimony of Matthew Mehlhaff**  
**SUPPORT Senate Bill 208**

TO: Chairman William C. Smith, Jr., Vice-Chair Jeff Waldstreicher, and Members of the Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Matthew Mehlhaff, Bethesda, MD (District 16)

DATE: February 5, 2020

My name is Matthew Mehlhaff. I'm a gun owner, a volunteer with Moms Demand Action, and a stay-at-home-dad of two little kids—a daughter, age four, and a son, age seven. My wife works for the Air Force at Walter Reed Medical Center.

Before the Air Force relocated our family to Maryland, I worked as a law enforcement officer, and I hope to work in law enforcement again. I worked in Sacramento, CA, as a police officer for 5 years, and in Dayton, OH for 4 years. I know the guys who led the forensics team after the terrible shooting in Dayton on August 4, 2019. I know first-hand what guns can do, what it looks like when someone is shot, whether it's with a handgun or a shotgun or a rifle. But none of that is what got me involved with Moms Demand Action.

Last year, my son went through his first active shooter drill. Our family was living in Connecticut, and he was in kindergarten. He came home really excited to tell me all about how he had learned what to do if a bad guy comes to school. He said, "First, I'm gonna try to run. If I can't run, I'm gonna hide. And if I can't hide, I'm gonna fight the bad guy!"

A few months ago, my daughter went through her first active shooter drill. She was with me at an appointment at Walter Reed when they had a lockdown drill. I hid in the dark with my 3-year-old daughter trying to explain why this is all necessary.

As a former police officer, I used to train teachers for active shooter drills. Now we're asking people who are not law enforcement to deal with this kind of stress. I signed up for that. My mom is a teacher—she did not sign up for that. My son did not sign up for that.

That's not freedom. It's not freedom when we're asking a teacher to block the door for her kids. My 7-year-old shouldn't be thinking about fighting bad guys with guns. There's something seriously wrong when we feel like we need to be armed all the time, because even if the police arrive in 30 seconds, as they did in Dayton, 27 people have already been shot and wounded and 9 people have already been killed.

We need to do something *before* the bad guys get the guns. Background checks are the most basic thing we can do, and it's past time to make sure that every gun transfer—be it a handgun, a rifle or a shotgun—requires a background check to ensure that gun doesn't fall into the wrong hands. I thank you for listening and for supporting Senate Bill 208.