

Written Testimony of Andrea Chamblee **SUPPORT HB 4**

TO: Chair Luke Clippinger, Vice-Chair Vanessa Atterbeary, and Members of the Maryland House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Andrea Chamblee, Silver Spring, MD (District 19)

DATE: January 15, 2020

My name is Andrea Chamblee. I grew up in Howard County, moved to Prince George's, then Baltimore City, Hagerstown, Frederick, and Beltsville. Now I live in Montgomery County, in District-19. My husband, John McNamara, was one of the five journalists shot and killed at the *Capital Gazette* on June 28, 2018.

I know what it really means when people say it's too easy for dangerous people to acquire firearms. Maryland may have some of the strongest gun laws in the nation, but it's not enough. There are significant loopholes that endanger our families, including the one corrected by this bill.

You probably already know that 100 Americans die from gun violence every day, but do you also know that 200 people are shot every day who don't die? Some of them spend the rest of their lives with bullets in their bodies; traumatized, struggling every day, abiding new limitations, new burdens, and new fears.

But that's not the full picture. There are hundreds more who watch the horror of these deaths and injuries unfold. The *Capital Gazette* staff can never un-see my husband John looking up at a gun pointed at him, and him falling, murdered, to the floor. They can't un-see their own feet stepping over Wendi's body. They can't un-hear the bullets whizzing past as they ran for safety. They can't un-see Rebecca dragging her own bleeding body across the office floor, or un-hear her imploring first responders not to let her die.

None of these numbers include the brave first responders, who we're all so grateful for, and yet forget when we think of the impact of gun violence. None of these victims are included in the 100 killed or the 200 injured. They aren't counted at all. I'm not counted. What has happened to me since my husband was killed, none of it is counted. No bullets touched my body, but you can't tell me there's not a gaping hole in my chest.

You can't tell me, as Harford County Republican Senator Robert Cassilly said so dismissively, so callously, at the Senate JPR hearing last session, that "only one or five" people are affected. That's not only untruthful, it's wrong. John and Wendi and Rebecca and Gerald and Rob had lives that were rich with partners, children, family and friends. All impacted by their senseless deaths.

My nieces ask us why there is a sign outside of their ballet class telling people not to bring guns. Unlike other kids, they know active shooter drills aren't just "practice." They see grief in their loved ones faces every day. My nephew wants to know when John is coming back from his trip to the moon. It's not ok that children have to ask us questions like this.

100 a day isn't the right number. 300 a day isn't the right number. There were 700 people who loved John in his life and came to his memorial. That's closer to the number of people affected every day by gun violence. All of those 700 people demand action. We demand to be counted.

A small but loud group of extremists will stand up here today to tell you that gun sellers should be allowed to continue to profit by selling guns to already-prohibited people. They'll say it doesn't matter enough to do a background check to make sure we're not handing over guns to dangerous people. That they should continue profiteering from the fear, injury, and death of fellow Marylanders.

The vast majority of Marylanders support background checks on all gun sales and transfers. They know the Constitution, and they know the risk of easy access to guns, including rifles and shotguns. Listen to your constituents. Listen to the ones who speak for those who can no longer speak at all. Don't fail us.

We demand action. We demand your vote in support of HR-4.