

SB0479 Public Safety - Access to Firearms - Storage Requirements (Jaelynn's Law)

Bill Sponsor: Senator Smith

Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Organization Submitting: Lower Shore Progressive Caucus

Person Submitting: Dr. Nicole Hollywood, LSPC

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0479 on behalf of the Lower Shore Progressive Caucus. The Caucus is a political and activist organization on the Eastern Shore, unaffiliated with any political party, committed to empowering working people by building a Progressive movement on the Lower Eastern Shore.

Sixteen-year-old Jaelynn Willey was shot and killed inside Great Mills High School in St. Mary's County on March 20, 2018. She was a swimmer, one of nine children, and known for making the best chocolate chip cookies. Jaelynn was shot by a fellow student in possession of his father's 9mm handgun. This bill is named in her honor.

The most recent data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS, 2018) sites firearms as the leading cause of death for children and teenagers aged 1 to 19 in the United States. That statistic also holds true in the State of Maryland where guns kill more kids each year than cancer or automobile accidents.

Guns from home, or a friend or family member's home, are used in the majority of children firearm suicides as well as in the preponderance of incidents of gun violence on school grounds. Secure storage works, as proven by studies such as one published in the Journal of the American Medical Association that found that households that locked both firearms and ammunition had a 78 percent lower risk of self-inflicted firearm injuries among children and teenagers (Grossman DC, Mueller BA, Riedy C, et al, 2005).

The Lower Shore Progressive Caucus recognizes the importance of secure firearm storage. SB0479 would prohibit a person from leaving a firearm in a location where an unsupervised minor could gain access to the firearm as well as establish certain exceptions to this prohibition.

The Lower Shore Progressive Caucus supports this bill and recommends a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.