



Montgomery County Young Democrats Testimony to Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee In Support of SB 479-Public Safety-Access to Firearms-Storage Requirements -Jaelynn's Law February 11, 2021

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, members of the Committee,

Thank you for accepting our testimony. My name is Michael DeLong and I am writing this testimony on behalf of the Montgomery County Young Democrats in support of SB 479-Jaelynn's Law. MCYD is a group of young Democrats ages 14-34 who are dedicated to making Montgomery County and Maryland better places to live, with freedom, opportunity, and justice for all. Jaelynn's Law will help ensure that guns are safely stored and reduce unintentional shootings, saving lives.

This bill, SB 479, modifies and expands an existing ban on related to children's access to guns. It states that someone may not store or leave a gun in a location where they knew or should have known that an unsupervised minor could gain access to the gun. If they do this, they are guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to maximum penalties of one year's imprisonment, or a substantial fine. If the owner stores the gun in that location and an unsupervised minor does gain access to the gun, and the gun causes harm to themselves or someone else, they are also guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to a maximum of three years in prison or a \$5,000 fine.

The bill also increases the age of unsupervised firearm possession to age 18. It is named after Jaelynn Willey, a sixteen old girl who was shot and killed by an ex-boyfriend who used a handgun legally owned by his father, and which was not properly stored.

Jaelynn's Law is sponsored by Senator Will Smith and Delegates Dana Stein and Sandy Bartlett, and we thank them for their efforts. It will strengthen gun owners' accountability and responsibility for the safe storage of guns and prevent injuries and

deaths. Too many guns are not properly stored, and as a result children and teenagers often know where they are and can get access to them. Sometimes children play around with the gun, it goes off, and someone is hurt or killed. Or a teenager gets the gun and tries to use it in a fit of anger, not realizing the consequences, and someone is injured or killed.

These cases are heartbreaking-no family should have to go through that. Jaelynn's Law will encourage safe gun storage and promote accountability from gun owners and a change in the culture toward safety. Last year the bill came very close to passing, but we ran out of time because of the Legislature's early adjournment.

SB 479 will preserve life and marks a big step for safe gun storage. MCYD urges the Committee to support this bill.