
SB 479
Letter of
Information

TO: The Honorable Will Smith
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Susan Ziegfeld, MSN, PNP-BC
Manager, Pediatric Trauma and Burn Program, Johns Hopkins Children's Center

DATE: February 11, 2021

The views expressed here are that of the Pediatric Trauma and Burn Program and do not necessarily reflect the policies or positions of Johns Hopkins Health System.

The Pediatric Trauma and Burn Program at Johns Hopkins Children's Center wants to provide information regarding **Senate Bill 0479 Public Safety - Access to Firearms – Storage Requirements (Jaelynn's Law)**. This bill would reduce unsupervised access of firearms by minors and impose penalties for parents or caregivers who store or leave firearms in locations easily accessible to minors. If this bill were to pass, it would increase the scope of existing firearm storage laws by raising the legal age limit for possession of said firearms from 16 to 18 years of age. This bill would also strengthen current legislation by requiring safe storage practices for all ammunition and firearms regardless of whether the firearm is loaded or not.

Hospitals across the United States are seeing an alarming increase in youth penetrating injuries and gun violence and Maryland is no exception. As a Level I pediatric trauma center, Johns Hopkins Children's Center providers have seen first-hand the devastation that these injuries can cause. To put the current uptick in youth penetrating injuries into perspective, we would like to provide some data from previous fiscal years. During FY 2017, 47 pediatric patients were treated for penetrating injuries and we began to see a gradual downward trend during the subsequent fiscal year. By the end of FY 2019, only 43 pediatric patients were treated at our hospital for penetrating injuries. During FY 2020, the number of pediatric patients treated for penetrating injuries at our institution increased significantly to 73. Unfortunately, our Children's Center has treated 64 pediatric patients to date during this fiscal year and we still have several more months to go. At this rate, we are on track to double the number of pediatric penetrating injuries seen in in FY 2019. This is not only a judicial issue, but a public health crisis in its own right.

While laws related to youth firearm access are less stringent in our neighboring states of Delaware, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia, Johns Hopkins Children's Center is

providing this information so that the Committee is aware of the current youth violence climate while considering **Senate Bill 0479 Public Safety - Access to Firearms – Storage Requirements (Jaelynn's Law)**.