



### **SB479: Jaelynn's Law**

Chairman Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee,

In March of 2018, my world changed forever. My high school, Great Mills High School, was the next in a long list of school shootings. My classmate, Jaelynn Willey, was fatally shot and passed away two days later. I remember sitting on the floor of my best friend's living room, holding her while she cried that Jaelynn didn't deserve this. Jaelynn was a sweet girl. She was a big sister. She was a swimmer. I didn't know her well but over the last (nearly) three years I have heard the way her family and friends talk about her, and it breaks my heart every single day that she will never get to grow up and live her life. Jaelynn deserved the world, and it was all taken away by a student holding his father's glock.

The shooter was a 17 year old student. Under Maryland's current child access prevention laws, he was able to attain that firearm and no one was held responsible. Ever since the shooting, I have tried to find ways to honor Jaelynn and do my part to make sure that other communities are not ripped apart the way mine was. I firmly believe that minors should not have such unrestricted access to firearms and I urge our legislature to pass stronger child access prevention legislation. The bill before you now, SB479, will tighten restrictions, raising the age of access from 16 to 18, as well as introducing a tiered penalty system that will allow law enforcement to hold reckless and irresponsible gun owners responsible if harm is inflicted with their weapon. As

well as protecting our communities, this legislation will help to keep teens safe if they are at risk of suicide by limiting their access to a highly lethal method of suicide.

I have submitted written and oral testimony each session since the shooting. I have lobbied up and down the halls of Annapolis. I have spoken with family after family that have lost loved ones to gun violence and my heart breaks each and every time. Jaelynn's Law can and will save lives, but only if you let it. I ask your committee to swiftly pass SB479 and to encourage your colleagues to support it when it comes to the floor.

With Peace,

Jaxon O'Mara

Great Mills Class of 2019

Maryland Policy Advisor

*March For Our Lives*