



### **SB0479: Jaelynn's Law**

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

Child access prevention, or CAP, is essential to building safe, peaceful communities and protecting even the youngest Marylanders from gun violence. CAP laws have statistically proven to be one of the most comprehensive, intersectional ways to address America's gun violence epidemic. By making sure that firearms are properly stored and secured away from where children can reach them, it prevents these household firearms from being used in school shootings, youth suicides, and unintentional shootings among children and teens. CAP protects not only a child from causing harm to themselves, but also the community around them.

While Maryland already has a version of CAP as a part of the law, SB0479, would strengthen these laws, thus creating a safer state for all. Raising the definition of a minor from 16 to 18 years of age will ensure that all children and teens in Maryland receive these protections, which is especially important as teens are at a particularly high risk for suicide.

Additionally, this bill encourages safe firearm storage by holding those who allow a child access to an unsecured firearm responsible by implementing a graduated system of penalties. CAP reinforces gun owners' accountability and responsibility to possess firearms. With all

rights, including the right to bear arms, comes with responsibilities. The graduated penalties system will ensure that those who fail to protect children and teens in the home are held accountable. But it also trains younger generations to be responsible gun owners for tomorrow by requiring responsible gun ownership today.

While strengthening CAP laws is one of the many steps needed in ending gun violence, it is nonetheless a step in the right direction. For far too long, household firearms have gotten into the hands of children and been used to hurt themselves or others in incidents both intentional and unintentional. SB0479 will take action to protect our communities, especially our youngest and most vulnerable members, and create a safer more peaceful Maryland for all.

With Peace,

Laurelle Maubert

Maryland Policy Coordinator

*March For Our Lives*