



Testimony in Support of  
Child Firearm Access Prevention  
SB479/HB200

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Dear Chairman Clippinger, Vice-chair Atterbeary, and members of The Judiciary Committee,

My name is Woodie Kessel. I am a pediatrician and a longtime resident of Montgomery County Maryland. I'm writing in support of Jaelynn's Law (SB 479 / HB 200) in memory of Jaelynn Willey, a 16 year old student at Great Mills High School murdered by a 17 year old classmate who used an unsecured Glock handgun legally owned by his father. This bill will advance Maryland's existing Child Access Prevention Law and help reduce unintentional firearm injuries and suicides to children and adolescents by covering all minors up to 18 years of age who could get access to the firearm by requiring safe storage of unloaded/loaded unlocked guns as well loaded weapons.

Caring for a child shot by another child, albeit unintentional, was one of my first tragic experiences as a medical student in the emergency room in Lincoln Hospital in the South Bronx. His death and caring for adolescents who sustained head injuries from attempted death by suicide using guns left an indelible mark on my soul and a commitment to prevent injury and death from lethal firearms.

Gun safety, in addition to all other traditional home safety practices, is a priority of all of my pediatric colleagues and our American Academy of Pediatrics. Indeed protecting children and adolescents from toxic chemical cleaners by locking kitchen cabinets, from ingesting medications employing safety caps and locking medicine cabinets, from automobile injuries using car safety seats / seatbelts / drivers education / learner's permits / licensing, from swimming pool drownings by fencing, are but a few of the accepted practices parents fully embrace to prevent harm to their children by restricting access to injurious means.

Unlocked, loaded or not, firearms pose a serious threat to the life of a child, adolescent, and their parents that can be mitigated by simple safe storage of firearms. An estimated 70% of children and adolescents in Maryland live with law abiding families who own guns. These children and adolescents may be at-risk

for experiencing injuries and trauma directly or indirectly from firearm- related suicide, unintentional injuries, and domestic homicides--all preventable by safer gun storage practices.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to testify in honor of the heartbreaking death of Jaelynn Willey by enacting SB 479 to prevent these tragedies from continuing.