

Testimony on HB200, Safe Storage Requirements to Prevent Unauthorized Access to Firearms by Minors (Jaelynn's Law)

Testimony by Peter Benjamin on behalf of Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence

Good afternoon Mr. Chair, Madam Vice Chair, members of the committee. I am Peter Benjamin and I live in the Town of Garrett Park. I am a former mayor of the town. Garrett Park is in district 18, and we are pleased to have Delegate Shetty represent us on this committee.

Too often we hear of a young child who has gained access to a firearm belonging to his or her parents and, playing with the gun together with another child, discharges the weapon unintentionally and injures or kills the other child.

Too often we hear of a teenager who becomes angry at another teen and, knowing where a gun is stored in his or her home, gets the firearm and uses it to try to kill the other.

Too often we hear of a young person who, upset about a relationship, depressed by pressures, or just lonely and feeling lost, uses a gun to end his or her life.

With a gun, a suicide attempt is three times more likely to be successful than if one is not available. Without a firearm, most of these situations would not occur, or may result in injury, but not death.

By adjusting Maryland's law to cover all minors and by establishing penalties for storing a gun in a manner that allows access by a minor, and escalating those penalties depending upon what level of harm results if a minor does access and use a firearm, HB200 enhances the enforcement of existing law over a broader range of young people and decreases the potential for these types of incidents.

I fully support the changes proposed by HB200.