



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support of HB 200- Public Safety - Access to Firearms - Storage Requirements (Jaelynn's Law)

TO: Delegate Luke Clippinger and the members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Janice Bird, MD UULM-MD Gun Violence Task Force Chair,
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland.

DATE: March 1, 2021

We, Unitarian Universalists, believe that we all belong to an interconnected community responsible for the safety and well-being of all. We have seen how gun violence affects all of us, we have witnessed first-hand how the effects of one event ripple out into the community. We say that victims and their family deserve our “thoughts and prayers.” However, when firearms are the cause of their suffering, we should take steps to prevent this harm, where possible.

Last year, we were able to testify in person for this Safe Storage and Child Access Prevention bill that would strengthen current Maryland law by decreasing access to guns by children under the age of 18. We know that unlocked guns in the home will increase the risk of accidental and intentional gun injuries and suicide.

Studies have shown that preventing children’s access to guns will decrease suicides by guns and save lives. According to the Harvard Injury Control Research Center, in 82% of youth suicides, the victim gained access to the firearm from a family member. It’s important to note that suicide rates among children of color are skyrocketing. Research shows that the suicide rate is two times higher for black elementary school aged children compared with white children of the same age group. This bill would address this frightening trend.

Some of you were Maryland legislators when the Firearms Act of 2013 was signed into law. These measures have been demonstrated to be effective in decreasing gun violence without compromising the rights of law-abiding citizens.

The measure before you today is another tool to protect all of us from gun violence. We ask our legislators to stand on the side of love and justice and vote for this bill and others that strengthen Maryland’s gun violence prevention laws.

We urge a favorable report,

Janice Bird, MD

Annapolis, MD