

Testimony: HB0200 Public Safety - Access to Firearms - Storage Requirements (Jaelynn's Law)

Position: Oppose

James Simpson  
1513 Bellona Ave., Apt. B  
Lutherville, MD 21093

Mr. Chairman, Madam vice chair and members of the committee:

Please stop talking about "sporting use." The entire purpose of having a loaded, immediately accessible firearm at home is to defend life and property from would be attackers. This proposed bill essentially makes such use virtually impossible, and thus defeats the main reason for keeping a firearm in the home. When a burglary or home invasion occurs there is rarely, if ever enough time to run to a safe -- even providing it is not in the room being accessed by said attackers -- work the combination, or find the key to open the safe, and then render the firearm in workable condition. If the firearm is accessible, it must be unloaded with the ammunition being inaccessible. This again creates a prohibitive time delay.

It is indeed tragic when an unattended minor gains access to a loaded firearm and through inexperience and/or accident discharges that firearm causing bodily harm or death, either to oneself or another. But forcing firearms owners to disarm themselves does nothing to address the underlying problems of youth suicide, school shootings and other situations where minors gain access to firearms and use them deliberately.

Many school shootings, with the most recent notable example being the Parkland shooting in Florida, could have been prevented had the teenage offender's well-known problems been addressed. This has been the case in many mass shootings, not limited to youths. For example, Nidal Hassan's shooting rampage could have been prevented had the military taken steps given Hassan's well-known intention to attack Americans. But nothing was done. The same with the Pensacola Naval Station shooting in 2019. Mohammed Saeed Alshamran's ideology was well-known. Should such security risks be allowed to join the military?

According to the CDC, accidental youth (age 1-18) firearms deaths between 2000 and 2019 have averaged 116 per year. This is only slightly more than those killed by accidental falling (110). Of course one death is too many. There are few things more tragic than losing one's child. But this is more than outweighed by the potentially huge number of deaths that could be prevented through defensive use of a firearm at home.

There are 3.7 million home break-ins annually, many leading to serious injury, rape and death in numbers far surpassing those killed by accidental firearms use. A choice has to

be made. Do we sacrifice the many deaths, rapes and serious injuries to save those few who unfortunately die by accidental discharge of a firearm by making workable access to firearms illegal? Or do we work harder to teach our children both the value and the danger of firearms? Fifty years ago, these death statistics were negligible. That is because as a general rule our nation had a healthier attitude toward firearms, recognizing both their benefits and potential dangers.

The answer is not to disarm Maryland.