

HB200 / SB479

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I am a Woman of Color, Mom, teacher, volunteer firearms instructor for women, and safe and law abiding citizen. You might ask why a Mom and teacher would enter into the world of firearm ownership. Well, this Mom once had to call 911 when an angry person walked along the driveway near my home and verbally threatened my family. It took 20 minutes for the police to arrive that day! 20 very, very long and scary minutes holding my young children inside the house, and trying to keep them from my fear! To make matters worse, because of the circumstances that angry man was not taken to jail but simply asked to leave. I learned that horrible day, that when my family's safety is in danger that seconds count. But sadly, the police are many minutes away. That was the day I decided to become a safe, educated citizen who could protect their family if ever threatened again. I tell you that I am not alone, as so many now millions of women have also decided to protect their families with safe and legal firearm ownership. That is especially true this year as we deal with increased crime from prolonged economic losses during this pandemic.

You might say, "Well that was years ago." But just two weeks ago (early January of 2021), my son called 911 to report a dangerous situation on the beltway. He was put on hold for 25 minutes, at which point he gave up and hung up. Had his life been in danger that day, what would have happened in those long and scary minutes? You might also say, "Well we have to protect children." This Mom couldn't agree more, but there are better ways to protect our children!

Why would this bill make a Mom like me a criminal? Quite simply, wording. 'Could' is a generic word, unfortunately. Also, I speak with a little authority as a firearms instructor; we already train and educate all HQL students on proper and appropriate storage. We already emphasize the responsibility of preventing access of ammunition and firearms to unauthorized persons. That is already the case of law abiding citizens. As I write this, literally tens of millions of firearms owners across our nation are doing their due diligence in preventing access to prohibited and unauthorized people. They've been trained by instructors and in their courses to do just that.

In fact, there already exists law that speaks to this responsibility. The 2010 Maryland Code, Criminal Law, Title 4 Weapon Crimes, Subtitle 1 General Provisions, Section 4-104 - Child's Access to Firearms, section 3. This regulation specifically states: (c) Prohibited.- A person may not store or leave a loaded firearm in a location where the person knew or should have known that an unsupervised child would gain access to the firearm. What I am speaking out against is language that does not take the many issues described here into account, and language that is potentially redundant as the above mentioned regulation is already in existence.

I am also speaking out against legislation that would do nothing to prevent the next crime. For example, did you know that anywhere between 60,000 to 2.5 million lives are saved every year by citizens that use a firearm in a defensive situation? That data comes from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention; that data was obtained by studies from the CDC's scientists themselves; a source we are told to trust.

So today I am encouraging you to be courageous, to learn from law abiding citizens, to work towards a world where children are truly safe and law abiding citizen moms are not criminalized overnight. I implore you to help moms like me continue to be our family's first responders. And I implore you to join with the experts from Maryland's firearms organizations in working toward a world where children are safe in their schools and homes.