

DANA M. STEIN
Legislative District 11
Baltimore County

Vice Chair
Environment and Transportation
Committee

Subcommittees
Chair, Environment
Natural Resources,
Agriculture and Open Space



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 251
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3527 · 301-858-3527
800-492-7122 Ext. 3527
Fax 410-841-3509 · 301-858-3509
Dana.Stein@house.state.md.us

The Maryland House of Delegates

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Delegate Dana Stein in Support of House Bill 200

Public Safety – Access to Firearms – Storage Requirements

Chairman Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and members of the House Judiciary Committee:

There is much debate on how to reduce gun violence in our schools—including arming teachers and security guards, better mental health treatment, metal detectors, etc. Another important way to reduce gun violence in schools is to reduce access to guns among young people. Data shows that if youth did not have access to guns, more than two-thirds of past gun violence in schools could not have occurred.¹

This bill, HB 200, addresses weaknesses in Maryland’s current law on firearm storage so as to better protect children. This bill requires all firearms, loaded or unloaded, to be stored in a location where an unsupervised minor under the age of 18 could not get access. The penalties are differentiated based on the impact of a violation, so that if a minor gets access and causes harm to the themselves or another person, the penalty is higher than if no one were injured. The bill also does not include the language from last year’s Senate version that represented advice to prosecutors.

Nationally, between 2014 and 2018, more than 15,000 children (ages 19 and under) died due to firearms, and at least 13,000 sustained unintentional firearm-related injury or death.²

Firearms are the leading cause of death among children and teens in Maryland, and most of these guns come from their own homes, the homes of friends or of relatives.³ Just last month, a 16-year-old was accidentally shot and killed in Baltimore by another 16-year-old who was using his parent’s gun.

¹ John Woodrow Cox and Steven Rich, “The Gun’s Not in the Closet,” *Washington Post*, August 1, 2018. “. . . thousands of children have used unlocked pistols, shotguns and rifles to kill themselves or accidentally shoot others. And they’ve wielded them again and again to target classmates.”

² Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, Center for Violence Prevention, <https://violence.chop.edu/types-violence/gun-violence/gun-violence-facts-and-statistics>

³ <https://everytownresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Every-State-Fact-Sheet-2.0-042720-Maryland.pdf>

We all probably remember the shooting at Great Mills High School in Southern Maryland in March 2018. A 17-year-old student gained access to his father's firearm and shot and killed 16-year-old Jaelynn Willey and injured another 14-year-old. That tragic event was one of 97 school shootings nationwide in 2018, the highest number of school shootings ever, with 163 deaths or injuries—also the highest ever.⁴

The *Washington Post* found in 2018 that since 1999, shooters in at least 145 acts of gun violence in primary and secondary schools were under the age of 18. In 105 school shootings by juveniles in which the source of the weapon could be determined, 84 of the firearms used were taken from the child's home or from those of relatives or friends. In only four of those cases was the adult owner of the weapon criminally punished.⁵

An even deadlier issue for youth under 18 is gun-related suicide. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15-24 year olds nationally and the third cause of death in the same age group in Maryland. Nationally, guns were the cause of death in 47% in this age group (5,954 deaths).⁶

Research done by the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Center for Violence, in 2019 found that:

- Among young children (ages 0-12 years) who are killed by a firearm, 85% were killed in their own home.
- More than 80% of guns used by youth in suicide attempts were kept in the home of the victim, a relative, or a friend.⁷

There's a simple and effective way to prevent teen suicide: A 2016 study by the *American Journal of Public Health Association* found that states with child-access prevention laws that required guns to be stored in a safe manner have lower rates of adolescent gun suicide.⁸

By requiring that firearms, loaded or unloaded, *not* be stored or left in a location where a minor could gain access, it is likely that we will reduce suicides, school shootings, and accidental shootings by and of our youth.

I encourage this committee to vote favorably for this legislation.

⁴ Center for Homeland and Defense Security, "K-12 School Shooting Database," <https://www.chds.us/ssdb/incidents-by-year/>

⁵ Cox and Rich, 2018.

⁶ Centers for Disease Control, "Ten Leading Causes of Death By Age Group, 2019." <https://webappa.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/leadcause.html>

⁷ Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Center for Violence Prevention, <https://violence.chop.edu/types-violence/gun-violence/gun-violence-facts-and-statistics>

⁸ Crifasi, CK, et al., "Storage Practices of Gun Owners in 2016. *American Journal of Public Health Association*. April 2018: 532-37.