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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

House Bill 659 – Firearm Safety – Storage Requirements and Youth Suicide Prevention (Jaelynn's Law)

Judiciary Committee

February 23, 2022

SUPPORT

Background: House Bill 659 (HB659) would require gun owners to securely store their firearms so that unsupervised minors are unable to gain access to them. Additionally, this bill would require the Department of Health to develop a youth suicide prevention and firearm safe storage guide, with recommendations from a stakeholder committee.

Written Comments: Since the beginning of the pandemic, accidental gunshot deaths by children handling a gun have increased by 31% according to a report by Everytown for Gun Safety. The report further details that and instances of children taking hold of a gun and mistakenly shooting themselves, or others happens almost every single day somewhere in the country. 91% of the victims in these cases were under the age of 18. It is estimated that 5.4 million children are living in a household with a least one loaded and unlocked gun. This is deadly combination for tragedy, which the consequences are already being realized. Most of these shootings take place in homes of the shooter, the victim, a relative or a friend. The solution to this rapidly growing problem is simple: properly locking firearms so that no child can access them.

As Jews we believe that nothing is more important than preserving life. Countless more tragedies involving young people will happen if they are able to continue to access guns in their own homes. Firearms do not belong in the hands of minors.

With this in mind, the Baltimore Jewish Council urges a favorable report of HB659.

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.