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February 23, 2022

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The Honorable Luke Clippinger, Chair
House Judiciary Committee
Room 101
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Bill: HB 659 – Firearm Safety – Storage Requirements and Youth Suicide Prevention

Position: Support

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Committee,

The Maryland Psychological Association (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral-level psychologists from throughout the state, is writing in support of **HB 659 – Firearm Safety – Storage Requirements and Youth Suicide Prevention**.

With the onset of the recent pandemic, anxiety and stress has increased for all age groups, but particularly for children. Sadly, suicide has become a leading cause of death for young people. Between 2009 and 2018, gun suicides of minors increased by 82%. With respect to youth suicides by firearm, approximately 80% of the time the owner of the firearm was either a parent or another relative.

Unintentional youth access to guns is preventable. Modest improvements in firearm storage practice can significantly reduce youth firearm deaths, and laws preventing children's access to guns are associated with significant reductions of suicides by guns. Reasonable safety requirements for firearm storage make sense. We are also pleased to see that part of this bill includes the development and distribution of educational materials regarding firearm safety. For these reasons, the Maryland Psychological Association asks for a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 659.

Thank you for considering our comments on HB 659. If we can be of any further assistance, or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the MPA Executive Director, Stefanie Reeves, MA, CAE at 410-992-4258 or exec@marylandpsychology.org.

Sincerely,

Linda McGhee

Linda McGhee, Psy.D., J.D.
President

R. Patrick Savage, Jr.

R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Richard Bloch, Esq., Counsel for Maryland Psychological Association
Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs