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February 21, 2022

To: Members of the House Judiciary Committee
Re: HB 659 - Firearm Safety – Storage Requirements and Youth Suicide
Prevention (Jaelynn’s Law)
Position: **FAVORABLE**

Chair Clippinger and Honorable Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

The Baltimore City Council Suicide Prevention Legislative Workgroup is composed of providers, survivors, advocates, faith leaders, elected officials, nonprofit organizations, educators, community leaders, and researchers dedicated to decreasing barriers Baltimore City residents face to access efficient and effective mental health services to support their mental health, and prevent suicides from occurring within our city.

To this end, the Suicide Prevention Legislative Workgroup urges a favorable report on HB 659 - Firearm Safety – Storage Requirements and Youth Suicide Prevention (Jaelynn’s Law)

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), 57,000 Maryland youth (aged 6-17) have depression. 45.5% of youth aged 12-17 who have depression did not receive mental health care in the last year¹. Disturbingly, data from 2018 indicates a trend toward suicidal thoughts and behaviors among middle and high school students in Maryland’s public schools. This is especially true for youth that identify as LGBTQ+. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are 4 times more likely to attempt suicide than straight youth. We know that time away from peers, the illness and death of loved ones, and other traumas caused by COVID-19 will have a lasting negative impact on Maryland’s young people.

This bill reflects recommendations by public and behavioral health experts. It stipulates a commonsense update to Maryland’s Child Access Prevention (CAP) laws to reduce gun death and injury. Studies show that CAP laws can reduce suicide and accidental death among children by up to 54%². Specifically, this bill will add a requirement that guns and ammunition be stored

¹ <https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/StateFactSheets/MarylandStateFactSheet.pdf>

² Emma C. Hamilton, et al., “Variability of Child Access Prevention Laws and Pediatric Firearm Injuries,” *Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery* 84, no. 4 (2018): 613–619. See also, Peter Cummings, David C. Grossman, Frederick P. Rivara, and Thomas D. Koepsell, “State Gun Safe Storage Laws and Child Mortality Due to Firearms,” *JAMA* 278, no. 13 (1997): 1084–1086; Daniel W. Webster, Jon S. Vernick, April M. Zeoli, and Jennifer A. Manganello, “Association Between Youth–focused Firearm Laws and Youth Suicides,” *JAMA* 292, no. 5 (2004): 594–601; Jeffrey DeSimone, Sara Markowitz, and Jing Xu, “Child Access Prevention Laws and Nonfatal Gun Injuries,” *Southern Economic Journal* 80, no. 1 (2013): 5–25.

securely, protect minors up to age 17, provide additional penalties to caregivers that neglect the law, and support a public health campaign to educate residents about safe firearm storage and youth suicide.

The “dual pandemic”³ of suicide and COVID-19 will have a lasting negative impact on Maryland’s youth, and we must act now to protect children from preventable death or injury.

The Baltimore City Suicide Prevention Legislative Workgroup thus urges a favorable report on HB 659 - Firearm Safety – Storage Requirements and Youth Suicide Prevention (Jaelynn’s Law)

Sincerely,



Nick J. Mosby
President, Baltimore City Council

³ [COVID-19 and Suicide: A Crisis Within a Crisis | Hopkins Bloomberg Public Health Magazine \(jhsph.edu\)](https://www.hopkinsbloomberg.org/2020/04/20/covid-19-and-suicide-a-crisis-within-a-crisis/)