

Please **OPPOSE** HB659

Public Safety – Storage Requirements and Youth Suicide Prevention (Jaelynn's Law)

There were 33.7 per 100,000 opioid related deaths in Maryland in 2018.[1] Maryland had 2,087 opioid deaths in 2018; that's nearly 90 percent of all overdose deaths. These drugs (alcohol included) have to be kept somewhere. Are they accessible to those under 18 years of age? Accessible to non-prescription holders? Where are the bills for prescription drug (and alcohol to include beer) storage? What about bills with requirements to keep all one's mind altering substances under similar lock and key with similar penalties? What about bills telling people to keep their medical cannabis in a safe storage depository so as to keep it inaccessible from pre-18 year olds and non-card holders? The fact that the Maryland General Assembly doesn't target the storage of opioids and pot is yet more evidence that the true purpose of bills like this is absolutely NOT public safety but something else. I fear that there is misconception that gun owners are somewhat less than human, political enemies (which we are definitely not), and ALL the many bills over the years are a means of political warfare to place gun owners in constant legal peril; it IS just that, plain and simple.

Google this “teenager uses gun to defend”. There you will find many stories of responsible, well trained teenagers defending their parents, their siblings and themselves with firearms. [2] You will see stories such as (a) 17 year old boy shoots, man attacking father with wood saw; (b) 13 yr old girl uses rifle to save sister and self from home invaders, and the list goes on and on. Does the State wish the children in these news articles dead, because laws like this would have been a death sentence for all of them. In fact, similar laws HAVE been a death sentence for children. Take the year 2000 Merced, California case of 14 year old Jessica Lynn Carpenter whose two siblings were stabbed to death with a pitchfork in their own home by a home invader. [3]. While Jessica was well trained in handling firearms, when she went to retrieve one, she couldn't because her parents had them locked up in order to be compliant with California's new "safe storage" laws [4] and so she could do nothing to save her state condemned to death siblings.

This bill also furthers arbitrary, age based Goldilocks civil rights where one is either too young, or too old and that sliver of time in the middle is never "just right" but is highly restricted. 16 years old, 18 years old. What about 17 years, 364 days, 23 hours, 59 minutes and 59.9 seconds? These ages are completely arbitrary, human picked-from-the-sky numbers with no basis of determining the maturity of an individual - a true individual. I taught my daughters how to shoot when they were 7 since I realized they were ready; some of my nephews, however, needed a few more years to mature. Still, I keep my firearms locked up; why? Because its the right thing to do; but not because a bureaucracy who apparently knows my children better than I do says so. The State deals with one size fits all faceless, impersonal masses; a parent knows the individual and can act appropriately for that particular true human being.

Some young people are quite well trained in the safe handling of firearms and have mature sensibilities beyond their years but have no desire to do hunter safety because their families don't kill wild animals. That maturity should be determined by the responsible adults that know them best - their parents and not the impersonal, one size fits all bureaucracy of the State.

As for the "Suicide Prevention Guide"; lets be honest, its taxpayer funded anti-gun propaganda. A firearm safety class taught in schools would be a thousand times better use of resources.

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[1] <https://nida.nih.gov/drug-topics/opioids/opioid-summaries-by-state/maryland-opioid-involved-deaths-related-harms>

[2] <https://lawnews.tv/examples-of-kids-using-guns-to-defend-themselves/>

[3] <https://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=96055&page=1>

[4] http://www.tysknews.com/Depts/2nd_Amend/deaths_in_merced.htm