



The Jesse Klump Memorial Fund, Inc.
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February 21, 2022

To Members of the House of Delegates Judiciary Committee

Re: HB0659 – “Jaelynn’s Law,” Firearm Safety -Storage Requirements and Youth Suicide Prevention

I am writing to urge you to give serious consideration to this proposed legislation, which will save the lives of Marylanders from both suicide and accidental injury or death. The Jesse Klump Memorial Fund is the leading suicide prevention outreach and education program on the lower Eastern Shore, with a particular focus on preventing child and youth suicide. *At the JKMF, we are not advocating for the seizure of firearms, nor is anyone else in the wider suicide community. We only ask that firearm owners assume responsibility for the safety of themselves and those around them by adopting safe storage practices.*

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth between the ages of 10 and 24, and the rate has increased every year since 2007. Suicide is often an impulsive act, one which could be prevented by not making a firearm readily available.
- Teenagers turn to guns as a means of suicide more often than ever. The rate of gun-involved suicides increased by 59% from 2010 to 2019, while completed suicides by other means increased by only 27%. The overall rate increase for this period for teens was 60%, so the increase is driven disproportionately by access to guns. (Journal of the American Medical Association)
- In a survey by the American Academy of Pediatrics, over 4.6 million children in the US live in households with unsecured and loaded firearms. Children and adolescents who live in homes with unsecured firearms are four times more likely to die by firearm suicide than kids who live in homes with locked guns, or in homes with no guns (American Academy of Pediatrics).
- Nearly half of completed suicides by children and teens involve guns, and 90% of those used a gun in their own home or a relative’s home. (More than a third of accidental shootings, suicides and homicides that involve guns take place in the home of the child’s relative or friend).

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The **Jesse Klump Memorial Fund**, a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit corporation, exists to end the tragedy of suicide, to provide a place of healing for those who have lost loved ones to suicide, to financially support scholars of any age who have demonstrated a desire to make the world a better place through original, entrepreneurial community action, and to provide grants for training for healthcare and education professionals dedicated to suicide prevention and mental health.

ARE YOU CONSIDERING SUICIDE? WORRIED ABOUT SOMEONE? CALL 1-800-273-TALK

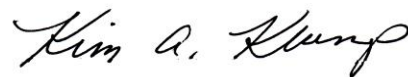
While our mission is to prevent suicide, the incidence of accidental shootings of and by children – many before school age – is of equal importance to parents, friends and families.

- Between 2015 and 2020 there were 2,070 accidental shootings by children, resulting in 765 deaths.
- The pandemic has increased the risk of accidental shootings by children. In 2020, accidental shootings by minors increased by 43% over the prior year (National Center for Health Statistics). Data is not in yet for 2021, but the rate for early in the pandemic year suggests that the total for that year will be a record, topping 400 accidental shootings.
- The vast majority of victims of accidental child shootings – 91% - are under the age of 18. One quarter of those killed in an accidental childhood shooting are 5 or under. While a quarter of the accidental shooters are 5 or under, the most likely group to be either shooters or victims are between the ages of 11 and 17.

No one wants to be the person who made a firearm available that resulted in a tragedy, either suicide or an accidental death. Our eleven years' experience counseling those who have lost loved ones to suicide is replete with stories of tragedies, including multiple suicides within one family, because firearms were left loaded and unsecured.

It is our wish that you consider every safety aspect of this bill and vote to move it forward toward passage in the 2022 session. Trusting in your careful and wise judgment, please accept our gratitude for your studying the data and making the right decision.

Sincerely,



Kim A. Klump, President

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