



CARE BRAVELY

HB659 – Firearm Safety – Storage Requirements and Youth Suicide Prevention (Jaelynn’s Law)

House Judiciary Committee

February 23, 2022

Testimony of Martha Nathanson, Vice President, Government Relations and Community Development
Position: **SUPPORT**

I am pleased to **SUPPORT** HB659 - Firearm Safety – Storage Requirements and Youth suicide Prevention (Jaelynn’s Law) - which requires gun owners to use safety equipment in storing their guns, and also provides for public awareness of the proper methods of gun storage, as a means of reducing tragic death and injury in youth. LifeBridge Health is a regional health system comprising Sinai Hospital of Baltimore, an independent academic medical center; Levindale Geriatric Center and Hospital in Baltimore; Northwest Hospital, a community hospital in Baltimore County; Carroll Hospital, a sole community hospital in Carroll County, and; Grace Medical Center in Baltimore (formerly Bon Secours Hospital).

Through its network of hospitals, clinics, physician offices and other provider settings, LifeBridge Health treats victims of violence. Sinai Hospital is a Level II Regional Trauma Center, where victims of gunshots are routinely treated. In FY21, 170 Trauma Center patients (8%) were brought there due to a gunshot wound and 21 patients (1%) brought to the Trauma Center were brought due to suicide attempts. Suicide accounts for 19% of Sinai’s trauma fatalities. Furthermore, of the 7 child suicides in Baltimore City over the last 5 years, 2 children died because of self-inflicted gunshot wounds in homes with inappropriately accessible guns.¹

Meeting Community Health Needs. We strongly support the elements of HB659 that require a public health campaign in the form of a Youth Suicide Prevention and Safe Firearm Storage Guide. Enabling individuals and communities to prevent violent injury and death is critical not only to improving the survival and ultimately health outcomes of residents but also to breaking the cycle of violence. Every three years, hospitals conduct Community Health Needs Assessments to glean their communities’ priorities for health care. Beginning in 2015, feedback from our communities indicated that violence was a key concern and that exposure to violence challenged their ability to achieve optimum health outcomes. As a result of this feedback, LifeBridge Health established the “Center for Hope,” expanding existing responses addressing violence and establishing new programs. Our team expanded as well to regularly help families and children with loved ones lost to gun violence. The safe storage requirements and the public health campaign elements of this bill make sense as a means of preventing suicide and gun violence, and for all the above reasons, we urge a **FAVORABLE** report on HB659.

Contact:

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¹ <https://health.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/2021%20Baltimore%20City%20CFR%205-Year%20Report.pdf> (page 50).