



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 10, 2022

**Testimony in support of HB 1344
Workgroup to Study Extreme Risk Protective Orders (Sagar Ghimire Act)**

Chair Clippinger and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

By all accounts, Sagar Ghimire was a bright young man with a promising future. An aspiring data scientist who had just graduated from Claflin University, Sagar moved to Baltimore County last year in hopes of attending graduate school. While settling into a new home in Woodlawn, Sagar was killed by a neighbor with a history of erratic and violent behavior. He was 24.

I was devastated when I heard this news, and rushed to the scene to offer whatever help I could to the community and those who knew Sagar, as well as two others who were killed and more who were injured in the same incident. My grief is nothing, though, compared to what his family felt as they gathered from across the country and from his home country of Nepal to mourn his passing. In the days and weeks which followed, there was one thing they wanted: justice.

The perpetrator of this incident had a history of run-ins with law enforcement, and neighbors reported that he often confronted them, accusing them of spying on him for the federal government. One resident, who had registered his concerns to the police, said in a *Baltimore Sun* story that the situation was “like a ticking bomb.” Tragically, Sagar was caught in the blast, and his family was left to wonder why, if the clues were there, was no action taken which might have prevented this incident? I put this question to our local law enforcement, as well as to our Baltimore County State’s Attorney and County Executive. I combed through the incident report to try and identify what could have gone differently. I could not get a clear answer. This bill would take a step toward providing that answer.

At Sagar’s memorial service in June, I shared my deep sadness at his loss, as well as my anger. As I said then, Sagar deserved more. He came so far and achieved so much. He was right at the edge of the rest of his life, and then it was all cut short. It is simply an injustice, and I was angry. I am still angry. Sagar’s death could have been prevented. If we continually strengthen our system’s safeguards to and provide support for those experiencing mental health crises, so many lives will be spared. We cannot rest easy, knowing that more families will be burdened with this grief. We cannot allow this to happen in our communities without doing everything we can to stop it. That was my pledge then, and I am fighting to make good on it today.

This is a complicated issue touching on law enforcement, mental health support, and firearm regulation, and as such requires more in-depth study to more thoroughly understand the factors at play. HB1344 would create a workgroup to review the implementation of Extreme Risk Protective Orders (ERPOs), a monumental piece of legislation seeking to keep guns out of the hands of those who represent a significant danger to their communities, and would present policy recommendations to couple ERPOs with intervention with mental health support for those individuals who need it.

This bill will give us the tools to more readily pursue justice for all the victims of this incident and stop such senseless violence from ever occurring again. It will help us build on the ERPO legislation to ensure that our neighborhoods are kept safe, and that the vulnerable people in our communities get the care and attention they need.

In light of all this, I request a favorable report.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Bhandari', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

The Honorable Delegate Harry Bhandari
Maryland Legislative District 8