



State of Maryland
Office of the Attorney General

Monday, February 21, 2022

TO: The Honorable Luke Clippinger, Chair, Judiciary Committee
FROM: Carrie J. Williams, Assistant Attorney General
RE: Attorney General's Support for HB 659

The Attorney General urges the Judiciary Committee to report favorably on House Bill 659. House Bill 659 would strengthen firearm storage requirements and create graduated penalties for storing a firearm in a location where an unsupervised minor is likely to gain access to the firearm. House Bill 659 also mandates the creation of a Youth Suicide Prevention and Firearm Safe Storage Guide. The Guide will detail safe gun storage requirements and highlight the risks of child access to firearms.

Firearms are the number one leading cause of death among children in Maryland.¹ An average of 53 children die by guns each year in Maryland. According to Maryland's State Suicide Plan, issued by the Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention, firearms are the most common method of suicide in the United States, and access to a firearm triples the risk of death by suicide.² The Plan also reports a dramatic increase in gun sales in 2020, and notes that "increased gun ownership in Maryland may lead to an increase in suicides if preventative measures are not taken."³

¹ See Gun Violence in Maryland, Everytown for Gun Safety, available at <https://maps.everytownresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Every-State-Fact-Sheet-2.0-042720-Maryland.pdf>.

² Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention, *Maryland's State Suicide Plan, 2020*, available at <https://health.maryland.gov/bha/suicideprevention/Documents/2020%20Maryland%20State%20Suicide%20Prevention%20Plan.pdf>.

³ *Id.*

House Bill 659 implements common-sense preventative measures to reduce the number of accidental gun deaths and youth suicide deaths and imposes appropriate penalties for allowing a child to access a firearm. The Attorney General urges a favorable report for House Bill 659.

cc: Members of the Committee