

**House Bill 515: Public Schools – Active Shooter Safety Drills or Trainings –
Requirements
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
April 4, 2023
Position: SUPPORT**

My name is Eileen Zeller and I live in Clarksville, Howard County, in District 9.

I am submitting this testimony as a volunteer for the Maryland Chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, and as someone who retired after a career in suicide prevention and public health. In retirement, I am also on the board of the Mental Health Association of Maryland and am past chair of the Governor’s Commission on Suicide Prevention. But for this testimony, I’m speaking as a Moms volunteer.

I support HB 515 because we need to protect our children using best practices that are grounded in science and that don’t inadvertently cause harm. That means our children need to be safe, feel safe, and be protected from unintentional emotional trauma.

Every time the Howard County Moms Demand Action group meets, we are joined by new volunteers. In January, after talking with her anxious child, a parent told me that she had spoken with the principal about the developmental appropriateness of school drills. In February, a pre-school teacher told me she was waiting for her leadership to institute new best-practices she had read about.

By now you’ll have heard Delegate Solomon’s testimony and other experts who likely referenced Everytown for Gun Safety’s research and the peer reviewed study they published with researchers from Georgia Institute of Technology.¹

Among their recommendations that the Maryland Center for School Safety would consider under HB 515: Parents should have advance notice of drills; drills should be announced to students and educators prior to the start; schools should create age and developmentally appropriate drill content with the involvement of school personnel, including school-based mental health professionals; and schools should couple drills with trauma-informed approaches to address students’ wellbeing both during the drills, and over a sustained period thereafter.

I ask for a favorable report on HB 515.

¹ El Sherief, M., Saha, K., Gupta, P. et al. Impacts of school shooter drills on the psychological well-being of American K-12 school communities: a social media study. *Humanit Soc Sci Commun* 8, 315 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-021-00993-6>.