

Aanika Arjumand_ HB515 Testimony.pdf

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Position: FAV

HB 515 Testimony – Public Schools – Active Shooter Safety Drills – Requirements

April 4, 2023

Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

First, I'd like to thank Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and the rest of the committee members for the opportunity to present on HB 515 regarding notification requirements for active shooter drills and trainings.

My name is Aanika Arjumand and I am an 11th grader at Gaithersburg High School. Walking in the halls of my school, I have 3 fears: failing my math quiz, forgetting my lunch, and texting my mom that there is a shooter at school. We are only 94 days into 2023 and with each day, my third fear grows. My county has already had multiple school shooting threats, and a recent lockdown solidified my position on this bill once I saw the distraught faces of my classmates. The mere possibility of someone entering the school with a firearm or a loud sound triggered feelings of anxiety and stress within myself and those around me. To paint a picture; hands were shaking, eyes were swelling with tears, and breaths were quick. And all from a simple *chance* of a shooter.

When it comes to active shooter drills, the line between illusion and reality is undistinguishable. So while we take measures in better preparing our students for such a dangerously possible circumstance, let's also take into consideration the methods of enacting the drill. As the bill requires, it's crucial to inform parents and students beforehand if a drill is taking place, so both parties aren't put into a state of shock when the time comes. The bill also sends information to parents regarding Maryland's safe gun storage laws, and emphasizes the importance of all families in Maryland knowing what is required of them to keep their guns secured. This isn't asking for much, but it will create a huge impact in how we tend to the emotions and actions of our students.

Adults often underestimate the seriousness of students. There is no need to incorporate gun sounds or imitations of a shooter in the building in order to incite action. We are equipped with the critical thinking skills to act properly when necessary-- especially when our lives are at stake. With the needs and emotions of every Maryland child, parent, and teacher considered, I urge you to vote in favor of HB 515. Thank you for your time.

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Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

First, I'd like to thank Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and the rest of the committee members for the opportunity to present on HB 515 regarding notification requirements for active shooter drills and trainings.

My name is Aanika Arjumand and I am an 11th grader at Gaithersburg High School. Walking in the halls of my school, I have 3 fears: failing my math quiz, forgetting my lunch, and texting my mom that there is a shooter at school. We are only 94 days into 2023 and with each day, my third fear grows. My county has already had multiple school shooting threats, and a recent lockdown solidified my position on this bill once I saw the distraught faces of my classmates. The mere possibility of someone entering the school with a firearm or a loud sound triggered feelings of anxiety and stress within myself and those around me. To paint a picture; hands were shaking, eyes were swelling with tears, and breaths were quick. And all from a simple *chance* of a shooter.

When it comes to active shooter drills, the line between illusion and reality is undistinguishable. So while we take measures in better preparing our students for such a dangerously possible circumstance, let's also take into consideration the methods of enacting the drill. As the bill requires, it's crucial to inform parents and students beforehand if a drill is taking place, so both parties aren't put into a state of shock when the time comes. The bill also suggests sending information to parents regarding Maryland's safe gun storage laws, which is important for all families to know as over 70% of school shootings are from unsecured guns at home. This isn't asking for much, but it will create a huge impact in how we tend to the emotions and actions of our students.

Adults often underestimate the seriousness of students. There is no need to incorporate gun sounds or imitations of a shooter in the building in order to incite action. We are equipped with the critical thinking skills to act properly when necessary-- especially when our lives are at stake. With the needs and emotions of every Maryland child, parent, and teacher considered, I urge you to vote in favor of HB 515. Thank you for your time.

_ Support - HB 515-Active Shooter Bill- Ashley Egan

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Position: FAV

**Testimony in Support of
HB 515 - Public Schools -
Active Shooter Safety Drills or Trainings - Requirements**

TO: Senator Brian Feldman, Chair and Members of the Education, Energy
And Environment Committee
FROM: Ashley Egan, Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland
Coordinator
DATE: March 7, 2023

I am the Coordinator of the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland. I live in Prince George's County Maryland. I am asking you to support HB 515 - Public Schools - Active Shooter Safety Drills or Trainings - Requirements. My kids have attended public school since my oldest started pre-k at Avalon Elementary School in 2009. She is now about to graduate from Oxon Hill High School's Science and Tech Program in May.

I still remember the day of her first active shooter drill, because she came home and told me all about it. She told me about how the code words were "Dr. Bruce lost her blue notebook." She then practiced with her two siblings for the next two weeks, just to be prepared. That drill terrified her.

Since then, all my children have participated in many active shooter drills, as well as many situations where the school was in lockdown because of criminal activity in the area. They have discussed which one of them will sacrifice themselves to the shooter so that the others might live. They have sat in the dark in coat rooms and bathrooms and had to think about what windows might betray their spot. It is a macabre and deadly version of hide in seek that they have had to perform multiple times a year.

They say it is just like a fire-drill, but is it?

As a mother, I can't even begin to help them through this trauma, the Columbine High School Shooting was two years after I graduated from college. My kids were shocked that I didn't have active shooter drills when I was in school. They hadn't been invented yet!

I am asking you to pass this bill, to study the effects of these drills on our kids and to provide them support to make it through the trauma that we are inflicting on them. This bill is a huge step in protecting our children. Please pass it.

Ashley Egan

7604 Lanham Lane
Ft. Washington, MD 20744

Support - HB 515 Active Shooter Drills -Ken Shilli

Uploaded by: Ashley Egan

Position: FAV



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support of - HB 515 - Public Schools — Active Shooter Safety Drills — Requirements

TO: Senator Brian Feldman, Chair and Members of the Education, Energy
And Environment Committee
FROM: Ken Shilling, Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland
Gun Violence Prevention Lead Advocate
DATE: April 4, 2023

Unitarians Universalists recognize the need for school safety. We have a moral obligation and responsibility for children to learn in school without fear of gun violence.

I recently spoke to some high school students. They mentioned their concerns with active shooter drills. I then shared my high school experience — we did not need to have active shooter drills fifty to sixty years ago. They were stunned.

Presently, some school systems are implementing various ways to conduct active shooter drills. Some drills are conducted in ways which traumatize youth and teachers. We should be protecting our youth and school staff, not damaging them.

HB 515 provides that active shooter drills should be based on trauma-informed methods. It specifies that parents should be notified in advance of an active shooter drill. This gives parents the opportunity to decide what is best for their children.

HB 515 requires model content on safe firearms storage, and active shooter drills. Education on safe gun storage makes our schools safer.

We urge you to vote for an amended House Bill 515 with provisions on permitting and sensitive places. We ask you to stand on the side of love and justice. We believe that these provisions will strengthen school safety in Maryland.

We urge a favorable report,

Ken Shilling

Ken Shilling
Gun Violence Prevention Lead Advocate

HB515 senate.pdf

Uploaded by: Beth Jarrett

Position: FAV

Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee - For the Hearing on Public Schools - Active Shooter Safety Drills - Requirements (HB515) April 4, 2023 SUPPORT

Research from Everytown for Gun Safety concludes that there is almost no evidence confirming the value of active shooter drills for preventing school shootings or protecting the school community when shootings do occur. Research does suggest, however, that active shooter drills in schools are associated with increased rates of depression, stress and anxiety, and overall physiological health problems for students. These harmful effects have been found in children as young as five years old up to high school, parents, and teachers. And as the mother of two children in elementary school, I can speak to this from experience.

This bill mandates important steps to help mitigate the potentially traumatic effects of active shooter drills including - requiring local school systems to inform parents of their active shooter drill schedule to help parents and student prepare for a drill which will help to reduce children's anxiety associated with such drills, involving mental health professionals in the creation of age-and developmentally appropriate content, and identifying staff and students who may need support during and after the drills, such as individuals with recent trauma or loss, individuals with disabilities, and others, and provide those individuals with coping strategies and additional resources to successfully complete and respond to the drills.

And perhaps most importantly for me personally, is the requirement that at the beginning of each school year, schools send home information on Maryland's firearm storage laws and best practices for firearm storage. In the US, firearms are the leading cause of death for children. 4.6 million children in the US live in a household with at least one **loaded and unlocked** gun. When there are firearms in the homes of children they should always be stored unloaded, locked and preferably in a gun safe. Preventing access to guns is paramount to reducing gun violence. The secret service has found that three-quarters of school shooters acquired their firearm from the home of a parent or close relative. Lets remove school shootings from the narrative altogether and prevent childhood access to guns in the home. I am with **Moms Demand Action** and I strongly urge this committee to issue a favorable report on HB515.

Beth Jarrett
Parent of 3 Baltimore County Public School students
ealbert@loyola.edu

HB515-Zeller-Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Eileen Zeller

Position: FAV

**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>.

McNamara Testimony - Ed Energy & Environment Cmt

Uploaded by: Jan McNamara

Position: FAV

**Testimony to Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
April 4, 2023**

Good afternoon, Chairman Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the committee. My name is Jan Donohoe McNamara.

I am a resident of Bethesda, in District 16. I am also the daughter of a combat veteran and a volunteer with the Maryland Chapter of Moms Demand Action.

I am here today in support of HB515.

As some of you are aware, my brother-in-law, John McNamara, was murdered during the 2018 mass shooting that took place at the Capital Gazette newspaper – only four miles away from where we are all sitting right now.

On the day their uncle was killed, my daughters were 9 and 11 years old. Approximately eight months after John died, I was contacted by my older daughter's school. I was informed that they were planning an active shooter drill and that I could bring her to school a little late that morning so she would miss it. Soon after that, the school reached out to say they realized the one-year anniversary of the Parkland shooting was the following day, so the drill would not be held.

My daughters have seen their uncle's face on the front page of the Washington Post, and his murderer's face in the national media throughout the years-long legal proceedings regarding his case. The idea that my children would be required to act out a realistic scenario in which a gunman was hunting them in the hallways of their school is not something I take lightly. I am grateful that the administration gave my husband and me the opportunity to decide how our family would proceed. And I appreciate that they thought through the context in which all of the students would experience such training and its timing.

My family's connection to gun violence is painful – but it is not unique. Each day, more than 110 Americans die through some form of gun violence. On top of that, students across the nation see headlines about school shootings – or incidents where a weapon has been brought to school – far too often. Many young people have been deeply affected by this issue in ways we are only beginning to understand.

I ask that you support this bill.

Thank you for your time.

HB515_Solomon_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Jared Solomon

Position: FAV



JARED SOLOMON
Legislative District 18
Montgomery County

Appropriations Committee

Subcommittees

Capital Budget

Vice Chair, Education
and Economic Development

House Chair
Joint Audit and Evaluation
Committee

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 515 Testimony – Public Schools – Active Shooter Safety Drills - Requirements
April 4, 2023

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, Colleagues, thank you for the opportunity to present on my bill HB515 regarding notification requirements for active shooter drills and trainings.

Since the 1999 Columbine shooting, active shooter drills and trainings have become a reality in school emergency preparedness plans; before the pandemic, more than 95% of public schools in the United States had trained and drilled students on a lockdown procedure, with at least 40 states requiring such drills.¹ However, their implementation and effectiveness in preparing students in case of an active shooter and its effects on students' mental health is still widely unknown.² A preliminary study from Everytown concludes that active shooter drills in schools are associated with increased rates of depression, stress and anxiety, and physiological health problems overall, in children as young as five years old up to high schoolers, their parents, and teachers.³

We want to prepare our students for emergency situations but not in such a way that does more harm than good. We do not mimic a fire, to prepare students for a potential fire in the building, and we should not mimic a school shooting to prepare students for that possibility either. For this reason, HB515 outlines best practices for active shooter drills and trainings, collects more data on the efficacy of such measures, and educates families on safe gun storage in hopes of preventing a school shooting.

There are four portions of this bill:

- 1) The first addresses how parents, students, and staff should be notified about trainings and drills. Active shooter drills and trainings are often conducted without notifying parents, students, and staff beforehand. Such an approach may cause heightened anxiety and lead to panic. The American Academy of Pediatrics cited an experience at a high school in

¹ [Nation's largest teachers unions call to end active shooter drills over fears they're traumatizing students | CNN](#)

² [Impacts of school shooter drills on the psychological well-being of American K-12 school communities: a social media study | Humanities and Social Sciences Communications \(nature.com\)](#)

³ [The Impact of Active Shooter Drills in Schools | Everytown Research & Policy](#)

which the school “deceived” its students⁴ into believing they were in an active shooting. Students vomited, fainted, escaped over fences, stampeded in hallways, and even wrote “farewell notes” to parents.

This bill would require that school systems inform parents, staff, and students in advance of the drills and trainings. Specifically, parents, staff, and students must be notified the month in which the drills or trainings will occur. Parents should also be provided with information to help their students cope with, communicate about, and understand the drills and trainings.

- 2) The second part of the bill outlines the planning process and implementation of drills. Policies surrounding drills should be created with age- and developmentally appropriate content. Drills and trainings should be announced in advance to school personnel and students, clearly identifying that no threat is present, and the drill must not include simulations that mimic an actual incident. Schools are required to identify staff and students who may need support during and after the drills, such as individuals with recent trauma or loss, individuals with disabilities, and others, and provide those individuals with coping strategies and additional resources to successfully complete and respond to the drills. No live simulations are allowed but these types of training exercises can be conducted voluntarily after school hours.
- 3) The third portion of this bill focuses on data collection to evaluate the impact of drills on students and staff. Schools will be required to collect data and feedback from school staff, students, and parents, to modify drills accordingly. The Maryland Center for School Safety will collaborate with either an institution of higher education or a federal or national research entity to study the effectiveness and psychological impact of shooter safety drills and trainings by researching and analyzing data collected from local school systems. The Center will identify best practices for drills and trainings and periodically update them based on feedback from local schools.
- 4) The last part of the bill deals with child access prevention measures. The Maryland Center for School Safety will consult with the State Department of Police to develop model content that informs parents of Maryland’s child access prevention laws and laws relating to the safe storage of firearms. These materials will then be provided annually to families and be updated as necessary.

Supported by mental health professionals, school associations, child safety advocates, the Maryland Center for School Safety, educators, parents, and students, HB 515 has the opportunity to minimize the negative impacts of active shooter drills, while still keeping our young people safe.

After making bipartisan improvements to HB 515 as introduced, it unanimously passed the Ways and Means Committee and the full House. I ask this committee for a favorable report on HB 515.

⁴ [Pediatricians call for schools to end active shooter trainings that could traumatize students | CNN](#)

HB901 FAV Testimony.pdf

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Position: FAV

Hello members of the Ways and Means committee,

My name is Nina Atrokhov, and I am currently a junior at Bethesda Chevy Chase HS in Montgomery County. I am here today encouraging you to support House Bill #515.

Lockdown drills are terrifying. A few times each year students participate in a drill where they have to prepare if there is an active shooter in the school. Teachers lock the doors, close the blinds, turn off the lights, and students go as far away from sight as possible; all of this in preparation, in case one day this danger becomes a reality. Huddled next to all your classmates, many of our minds go to the thought of what if this wasn't a drill. You hear the door handle shake, your teacher looking at all the students with sadness in their eyes, a student crying in the corner, and you feel the anxiety behind all the soft chatter. HB 515 will allow students to mentally prepare for the emotional burden of a lockdown drill and receive the help they need to be able to attempt to grasp the situation. This will allow parents to have a conversation about the drill and be there to support their children. Gun violence in schools is sadly a reality for many, this year in many schools around the state students have been having to go into real lockdowns. In many of these scenarios it is not clear if the lockdown is real or a drill. This year my school was put on a real lockdown, they had believed that someone brought a gun into school. I was taking a test in my 5th period class when they announced the lockdown and my teacher, believing it was a drill, made us continue at our desks. My phone kept ringing with frightened texts from my friends, my sister. Thankfully, there wasn't a gun. However, if there was, I would have been an easy target. If this bill was in place my teacher would have known that it was not a drill because we all would have known in advance if it was. This bill will not only help make these drills more manageable, but it will save lives. Therefore, I encourage you to support Bill #515.

Thank you for your time.

Before the House Ways and Means Committee
HB0515 - Active Shooter Drill Notification Act

SUPPORT

Good afternoon committee members and Chair Atterbeary,

My name is Nico D'Orazio, and I am a Junior from Thomas S. Wootton High School in District 17. I am here today advocating for the support of HB0515, regarding active shooter safety drills.

Last week, my school held an unannounced fire drill, and my mind immediately began preparing for the worst. My peers and I were worried that a school shooter had pulled the fire alarm and that our lives were in danger. Though this was only a fire drill, the fears that my peers and I experienced were unmatched by our fears when we undergo an active shooter drill. I can vividly remember my fear that these shooter drills could be real, and the deep anxiety they caused for my peers and me. The bitter reality of today is that these fears exist everyday for students, and are only amplified during an active shooter drill. Without mental health resources at hand after a drill, time and time again we have had to cope with these stressors on our own.

Notifying students and parents before conducting an active shooter drill is a necessity for the sanctity of Maryland students' mental health. Rather than permanently traumatizing students with worries of their own lives, HB0515 provides students the opportunity to practice lifesaving procedures and access mental health resources. When students are notified beforehand, they can emotionally prepare and intentionally practice lockdown techniques. Furthermore, with mental health resources provided after a drill, HB0515 provides a channel for students to work through

any emotional distress caused by an active shooter drill. Had HB515 been in place during the active shooter drills my peers and I have gone through, we would not have had to cope with the stress of an active shooter on our own.

Opponents of this bill state that active shooter drills with prior warnings will be ineffective and students will not treat them as important. However, students of today understand the seriousness and potentiality of a school shooter, signifying that students would treat drills as important. Moreover, because HB0515 requires the Maryland Center for School Safety to collect data on the effectiveness of these drills, we can ensure that the drills truly serve Maryland's students. The purpose of every active shooter drill is to train, not to traumatize. Therefore, I urge you to vote in favor of HB0515 in order to truly support the over 800,000 students of Maryland.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Good afternoon Delegates,

My name is Nick Dimitriadis. I'm a proud student at Towson High School and a candidate for Student Member of the Board of Education of Baltimore County. I'm thrilled and honored today to testify before you in support of HB515, Delegate Solomon's legislation to create greater transparency, communication, and student support as it relates to our schools' active shooter drills.

For so many students across Maryland, and nationally, right now, the need for comprehensive active shooter drills has become increasingly important. For me personally, this issue hits close to home.

Just a few months ago, the Towson High School community experienced a wave of threats against students, parents, and staff that left our community shaken for several weeks. What stunned me just as much as the threats themselves, however, was the lack of communication between our school and our students and families that deeply deteriorated not only the academic success and social and emotional well-being of our students, but the relationship between our school's leaders and community members. Just weeks ago, we had our first active shooter drill of the year, and while I'm appreciative of the progress we have made in Baltimore County to build more communication, it goes without saying that there is much work to be done across our district and ones throughout Maryland to make our drill process more effective.

HB515 is an exhaustive proposal to systematically improve the process by which students are prepared to respond to the threat of an active shooter while in school. Whether it be requiring schools to identify staff and students who may need support during and after drills, informing families and school personnel in advance of them occurring, or tracking data about their efficacy and effects on staff, students, and parents, this bill is a step in the right direction for building stronger, safer schools across Maryland. Now more than ever, amidst a recent surge in school violence throughout our state, I hope you'll support this crucial legislation that puts student's safety and wellness at the forefront of bettering our educational systems. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Before the House Ways and Means Committee

HB0515 - Public Schools - Active Shooter Safety Drills - Requirements

SUPPORT

Good evening delegates and audience.

It's an honor to have the opportunity to advocate for my support of HB515 with such a distinguished audience of amazing people. My name is Kiana Hajikarimloo and I am a sophomore at Northwest high school, in Montgomery county.

I clearly remember my first day of school in America. I was a freshman and didn't know anything about the American school system. Everything was new to me and I was trying to look at other students to learn what to do and where to go. Everything seemed very interesting to me and I was so excited that I finally got to attend school in America. After the first two weeks of school, I was in my volleyball class, talking to one of my new friends when I heard several alarms around the gym. I was shocked and didn't know what to do. "What is going on?" I asked my friend. "This is a shooter safety drill. Don't be scared. This is just practice." She told me calmly. I thought about my parents and texted them. Nobody knew what was going on at the school. Some people were saying this is an actual lockdown but other people were saying it is just a drill. But I wondered why? Why didn't the staff, parents, and students have a schedule for shooter safety drills? That afternoon, around 5 o'clock the principal sent an email that it was an actual lockdown and there was an active shooter on the campus. Still, when I think about that day I feel terrified. What if something happened to any of the students that day?

We all know that gun violence is a critical issue in the U.S., but it is not going anywhere. The only thing that we can do is to better prepare ourselves for these situations by providing notice to parents, guardians, students, and school staff about drill schedules. It is our right especially as students to know what is exactly going on in school. In 2022, there have been 32 gun incidents at either elementary, middle, or high school in Maryland. This is an issue that needs to be addressed as soon as possible and the most effective way is to adopt HB515 which prepares schools and students for these situations. By adopting HB515 to incorporate drills in the annual schedule for Maryland local schools, Maryland provides safety and preparation for students across the state so there would be fewer gun violence incidents in schools.

Gun violence shouldn't be something that we are worried about in the 21st century. Every student deserves to go to school without any fear of getting killed in a place that was supposed to be an educational environment. As students, our main issue should be about grades and tests, not guns and deaths. After all, isn't it better to be safe and prepared than to be sorry?

Thank you for your time.

Before the House Ways and Means Committee
HB515 – Active Shooter Drill Notification Act
SUPPORT

The goal of any type of preparedness drill is to empower, not to traumatize. For nearly a century, public school safety drills – practicing what to do in the event of a fire, tornado, air raid – have been part of the public school landscape. With the purpose of rehearsing a response to a hazardous situation when no threat is present, these drills are ideally conducted so that if an emergency does occur everyone knows what to do, and is familiar with what those actions feel like.

Added to the common emergency drills with which all are familiar, the horror of school shootings created a new threat, requiring a different response. Though well-intended – drills to practice what to do if a shooter threatens a school have had very mixed results. Having experienced those drills – as the parent of a public school student, as a public school teacher, and as a public school policy maker – I know that the substance of this bill infuses good intent with common sense, and intentional focus on the emotional impacts such drills have on those who experience them.

It takes a village to create a community where everyone feels safe, welcome and valued. The notice provisions of this bill – sharing in advance the timing and type of active shooter drills with school staff, students and families – embrace that truth. Empowering everyone involved with the knowledge of what will happen and when, along with intentional focus on those more likely to experience stress, anxiety and trauma as a result of participating – is the way we best use the power of the village. And I can tell you, having experienced these drills from the inside, the trauma experienced by students and staff is real. The bill’s inclusion of after-action response – calming measures to support participants in processing after the drill concludes – is essential to creating an environment where everyone feels valued and safe.

Active shooter drills remain controversial. There is little evidence to support their efficacy, in part because the structure and use of these drills across the country is erratic, and the events for which they “prepare” thankfully are rare. This bill’s inclusion of a data collection and monitoring

function is essential if policy-makers are to make good decisions about whether, and if so how, active shooter drills should be routinely incorporated in school preparedness work.

HB515 also includes another important tool to empower the village – requiring schools to share information about Maryland’s child access prevention laws and laws relating to the safe storage of firearms, as well as best practices for safely securing a firearm from children. Another common sense step that will save lives – and we need look no further than the actual events in a Newport News elementary school to see why these measures to educate are needed.

Thank you for your consideration,

Lynne Harris
Silver Spring, Md



Maryland's First
Nationally Accredited
Sheriff's Office



50 Maryland Avenue
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SHERIFF MAXWELL C. UY

February 13, 2023

VIA E-MAIL: jared.solomon@house.state.md.us

Honorable Jared Solomon
222 Lowe House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: HB 515 – Public Schools – Active Shooter Safety Drills Requirements

Dear Delegate Solomon:

This letter confirms my stated support for enactment of HB 515. As you know, the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) is actively involved in promoting school safety and staffs a Community Engagement Officer (CEO) at Magruder High School. In our view, the proposed legislation contains valuable enhancements to the current status of the Maryland Center for School Safety and current school safety programs as they relate to active shooter drills.

First, I think the requirement to study the effectiveness and impact of active shooter drills by researching and analyzing data collected from local school systems provides an essential mandate to continually improve such drills by using a data-based approach that allows for an annual evaluation and updates in the model policy. Second, I think the provision for increasing mental health services for students and school staff who need such services before, during and after such active shooter drills will go far to allay the fears of parents and staff who may be particularly vulnerable to the notion of active shooter drills generally. Third, I am particularly pleased that the bill provides notification procedures for parents at the beginning of the school year and a requirement that any active school drill procedure occurring during school hours must be developmentally and age-appropriate, as well as avoid specific scenarios – loud sounds imitating gun fire or explosions and role playing – that may be disturbing and traumatic for students and school personnel. In my view, all of these legislative changes can only improve the active shooter drills currently utilized, and enhance public support, especially that of parents, that is essential for the overall success of such drills.

In sum, MCSO supports this legislative effort to enhance the requirements for active shooter drills in schools. Thank you for your efforts and consideration.

Sincerely,

Maxwell C. Uy
Sheriff

O'Mara_HB515_FAV.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Jaxon O'Mara

Position: FAV

Jaxon O'Mara

HB515

Favorable

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on HB 515, Active Shooter Safety Drills or Trainings. My name is Jaxon O'Mara and I am a graduate of Great Mills High School in St. Mary's County. If you don't remember, on March 20th, 2018, a gunman entered my school and killed one of my classmates while wounding another. This is a day that I will never forget, and the events of that day haunt me. Although I was not in danger the day of the shooting, the anxiety and fear I felt that day follows me around.

I attended a protest in Washington D.C. over the summer that was interrupted by an individual moving toward the speakers and yelling that he had a gun. I grabbed my best friend's hand and we ran in the opposite direction as fast as we could. And we weren't the only ones running, hundreds of other young people attending the protest ran with us, terrified for what might come next. We are a generation of students traumatized by the constant mass shootings in our country and dramatized, unplanned active shooter drills can instill an even deeper fear, not knowing if you are in danger or if it is *just* a drill.

It's for that reason that I am here to support HB515. HB515 will save students further trauma by preventing surprise active shooter drills and putting a stop to other extreme drill procedures like the inclusion of fake blood or the sound of gunshots. HB 515 ensures that all parents, students, and school staff would be notified prior to the drill, to allow the members of the school community to prepare themselves. This bill would also require that drills be developmentally appropriate for students and trauma-informed, meaning that schools can tailor their drills to match their student population and provide the best, most appropriate training possible.

I know that myself and members of my community are still sensitive to active shooter drills, and there are many victims of gun violence or loved ones of those impacted by gun violence that can relate in all of our communities. This bill would bring active shooter drills to an appropriate standard and prevent unnecessary trauma for students, parents, and school staff. Until we find a way to stop school shootings, we need to prepare our students the best way that we can, without further traumatization. Thank you for your time today, I urge a favorable report on HB515.

Senate ver. 2023 HB515 (AS drills).pdf

Uploaded by: Karen Herren

Position: FAV



Testimony in **Support** of

Public Schools - Active Shooter Safety Drills - Requirements

HB515

Executive Director Karen Herren
Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence

April 4, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and distinguished members of the Committee,

Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence (MPGV) is a statewide organization dedicated to reducing gun deaths and injuries throughout the state of Maryland. We urge the committee for a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 515 which seeks to address how active shooter safety drills are carried out in school systems within the state of Maryland.

The United States experiences more school shootings than nearly all other nations. While deaths from school shootings pale in comparison to the overall toll of more than 110 daily gun deaths in the U.S., each school incident is tragic and traumatizing for both the local community and the nation as a whole - particularly because schools are intended to be safe spaces for children to grow and learn.

One prominent school safety strategy is active shooter drills. These drills typically require students and school staff to remain on lockdown in a designated area and practice specific emergency procedures, which often include staying quiet, locking the door, and turning off lights, but can also feature tactics such as fighting back, distracting the shooter, and evacuating. In some instances the drills are unannounced and simulate an actual active shooter event.

Evidence is unclear that these drills have any positive impact on the outcomes of school shooting incidents.¹ Nevertheless, under the circumstances it is hard to argue against them wholesale. That said, there is a growing body of evidence that some are being implemented in ways that cause harm even without a shooting event actually occurring. Studies on the mental health of the students, teachers,

¹ <https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-impact-of-active-shooter-drills-in-schools/>

and parents who experience them demonstrate increases in anxiety, stress, and depression. Further evidence reveals a lasting concern over physical health with long term concerns that this reality may ultimately have lifelong impacts on the generations coming up within this framework.

This legislation seeks to provide a framework for drills to offsets some of these negative impacts by ensuring that they are carried out in the least damaging way possible and that evaluators are in place to assess and adjust programs. While the research is evolving around the impact of these drills, indications are clear that drills should not mimic actual incidents, there should be advance notice when a drill is planned, and school personnel should help create appropriate drill content that involves trauma-informed approaches to address students' well-being.

HB515 further mandates that the Department shall create model content to inform parents of the state's firearm storage laws and best practices for safe firearm storage. The US Secret Service has undertaken two studies of targeted school violence, covering nearly 40 years of incidents. They found that three-quarters of school shooters acquired their firearm from the home of a parent or close relative (73 percent in the first study and 76 percent in the second study). The Secret Service's second study of incidents, from 2008 to 2017, revealed that in nearly half of the shootings, the firearm was easily accessible or was not stored securely.² Strong firearm storage laws (See also Jaelynn's Law, SB858/HB307) combined with effective public education is a critical component to reducing the likelihood of these horrific events.

MPGV urges a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 515.

² https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/Protecting_Americas_Schools.pdf

HB 515 MCSS Senate response.pdf

Uploaded by: Kimberly Buckheit

Position: FAV

Bill:	House Bill 515	Date:	April 4, 2023
Title:	Public Schools - Active Shooter Safety Drills or Trainings- Requirements	Committee:	Education, Energy, and the Environment
Position:	Favorable	Contact:	Kim Buckheit kim.buckheit1@maryland.gov 443-902-0622

On behalf of the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS), thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter of support for House Bill 515.

MCSS agrees that, *except* for active shooter drills and training happening outside of regular school hours with voluntary participants, active shooter drills and training should be conducted in a trauma sensitive manner without loud sounds that simulate gun fire, or actors role-playing as shooters or victims. Recently published research demonstrated that following training schools increased effective implementation of lockdown procedures with the use of drills that announced to participants “this is a drill”, and concluded the drill with a debrief¹.

MCSS agrees with the National Association of School Psychologists and National Association of School Resource Officers recommendation to “avoid[] highly sensorial drills that involve simulation activities to mimic a real experience as they can be traumatizing.”² MCSS welcomes the opportunity to identify developmentally and age-appropriate best practices.

MCSS supports engaging parents, students, and school personnel as partners in trauma sensitive school safety drills and training. Providing parents at the beginning of each school year with the annual schedule of the month in which a school shooter safety drill or training will occur can be included as a best practice. The notification requirements defined in House Bill 515 will minimize trauma for individuals occurring as a result of the drills and training, and allow drills and training to occur in a way that ensures students and school personnel practice procedures in a way that increases preparedness.

Thank you again for taking the time to consider the information shared above, and MCSS respectfully requests the committee give House Bill 515 a favorable report.

¹ Jacyln Schildkraut, Emily Greene-Colozzi, Amanda B. Nickerson & Allyson Florczykowski (2023) Can School Lockdowns Save Lives? An Assessment of Drills and Use in Real World Events, Journal of School Violence, 22:2, 167-182, DOI:[10.1080/15388220.2022.2162533](https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2022.2162533).

² NASP, NASRO, & Safe and Sound Schools. (2021). Best practice considerations for schools in active shooter and other armed assailant drills. Updated [Brief]. National Association of School Psychologists. www.nasponline.org/armed-assailant-drills

Public Schools – Active Shooter Safety Drills – Re

Uploaded by: Laura Stewart

Position: FAV

**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the Maryland Senate
Education, Energy and Environment Committee For the Hearing on
Public Schools – Active Shooter Safety Drills or Trainings – Requirements - House Bill 515
April 4, 2023
SUPPORT**

Free State PTA represents over 50,000 volunteer members and families in over 500 public schools. Free State PTA is composed of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business as well as community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and family engagement in Maryland. As the state's premier and largest child advocacy organization, Free State PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education. ***House Bill 515, Public Schools – Active Shooter Safety Drills or Trainings – Requirements - aligns with Free State PTA's legislative agenda which states the schools must provide a safe environment where all students, teachers and staff can thrive.***

House Bill 515 builds upon established legislation by requiring collaboration with an institution of higher education or a designated research entity to study the effectiveness and impact of active shooter safety drills or training. Also, it requires that at the beginning of the school year, local school systems inform parents of the schedule for active shooter drills.

An excellent component of House Bill 515 is the emphasis it has on communication and collaboration between school staff, students, and parents regarding notification to parents and students about measures the local school system is taking to provide sufficient notifications and information to parents and guardians in advance of walk-through lockdown drills as well as notification after the drills or trainings have occurred. Furthermore, this bill is consistent with the PTA's support of conducting regular and timely communication with families about safety policies and procedures. This is evident in the bill's requirement that communication on drills must include the type of drill (walkthrough, full-scale drill, etc.) and how students will be notified of a drill. Prior to any drill or training, parents must be provided with information to help their students cope with, communicate about, and understand the drill.

The Free State PTA supports the inclusion of safety education in curriculum and community programs. This bill is in sync with appropriate needed preparedness for students to address their own safety should an active shooter become present. In fact, this bill stipulates that they must be announced in advance to school personnel and students, clearly identifying that no threat is present and that they must not include live action simulations that mimic an actual incident or simulate a shooter or gun fire. Moreover, the policies surrounding the drills are required to be created with age- and developmentally appropriate content.

Free State PTA agrees that the effectiveness of active shooter bills should be studied, that students should have access to a mental health follow-up after active shooter bills, and that best practices should be followed carefully. This is in accordance with trauma-informed practices. **Therefore, the Free State PTA urges the passage of HB515.**

Sincerely,
Marla Posey-Moss
Marla Posey-Moss, President
mposey-moss@fspta.org

The mission of PTA is to make every child's potential a reality by
engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children. Page 1

XHB515_MSEA_Lamb_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Lauren Lamb

Position: FAV

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 515
Public Schools – Active Shooter Safety Drills - Requirements**

**Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment
April 4, 2023**

**Lauren Lamb
Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association strongly supports House Bill 515, which would authorize the State Department of Education to adopt regulations to incorporate active shooter safety drills or trainings in the annual schedule of drills for local school systems, require local school systems to collect data regarding active shooter safety drills or trainings for the purpose of identifying best practices for active shooter safety drills, and provide notice to parents, students, and school personnel.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Every child deserves to feel safe when they go to school. But many students today carry the heavy awareness that gun violence is far too common: since 2020, firearms are the leading cause of death for children in the U.S.¹ This is unacceptable, and we must do more to keep students safe both in and out of school.

Though ninety-five percent of public schools in the U.S. report using drill procedures for lockdowns, research has not conclusively affirmed the value of these drills in

¹ Preventing Gun Violence, the Leading Cause of Childhood Death. National Institutes of Health (2022). https://www.nichd.nih.gov/about/org/od/directors_corner/prev_updates/gun-violence-July2022.



terms of prevention or protection.² According to the National Association for School Psychologists, unannounced, overly realistic active shooter drills risk creating trauma and anxiety than preparedness.³ This legislation seeks to prevent such effects by ensuring that drills are announced in advance and banning the use of live exercises or loud sounds intended to mimic gunfire. As amended, it also permits the use of training in place of drills.

It is important for communities, schools, and policymakers to evaluate the efficacy of active shooter drills balanced against the anxiety and mental health effects that students and educators may incur. By outlining common-sense guardrails and requiring further research into best practices, House Bill 515 establishes a solid foundation to evaluate and address these risks.

We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on House Bill 515.

² The Impact of Active Shooter Drills in Schools: Time to rethink reactive school safety strategies. Everytown for Gun Safety (2020). https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-impact-of-active-shooter-drills-in-schools/?_gl=1*14llmou*_ga*ODkyNjY3NzM1LjE2NzYxNDE1OTk.*_ga_LT0FWV3EK3*MTY3NjE0NzMzOC4zLjAuMTY3NjE0NzMzOC4wLjAuMA.

³ Best Practice Considerations for Armed Assailant Drills in Schools. National Association of School Psychologists (2021). <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/systems-level-prevention/best-practice-considerations-for-armed-assailant-drills-in-schools>.

RLH Senate testimony HB515.pdf

Uploaded by: Lynne Harris

Position: FAV

Before the Senate Energy, Education and the Environment Committee
HB515 – Active Shooter Drill Notification Act
SUPPORT

The goal of any type of preparedness drill is to empower, not to traumatize. For nearly a century, public school safety drills – practicing what to do in the event of a fire, tornado, air raid – have been part of the public school landscape. With the purpose of rehearsing a response to a hazardous situation when no threat is present, these drills are ideally conducted so that if an emergency does occur everyone knows what to do, and is familiar with what those actions feel like.

Added to the common emergency drills with which all are familiar, the horror of school shootings created a new threat, requiring a different response. Though well-intended – drills to practice what to do if a shooter threatens a school have had very mixed results. Having experienced those drills – as the parent of a public school student, as a public school teacher, and as a public school policy maker – I know that the substance of this bill infuses good intent with common sense, and intentional focus on the emotional impacts such drills have on those who experience them.

It takes a village to create a community where everyone feels safe, welcome and valued. The notice provisions of this bill – sharing in advance the timing and type of active shooter drills with school staff, students and families – embrace that truth. Empowering everyone involved with the knowledge of what will happen and when, along with intentional focus on those more likely to experience stress, anxiety and trauma as a result of participating – is the way we best use the power of the village. And I can tell you, having experienced these drills from the inside, the trauma experienced by students and staff is real. The bill’s inclusion of after-action response – calming measures to support participants in processing after the drill concludes – is essential to creating an environment where everyone feels valued and safe.

Active shooter drills remain controversial. There is little evidence to support their efficacy, in part because the structure and use of these drills across the country is erratic, and the events for which they “prepare” thankfully are rare. This bill’s inclusion of a data collection and monitoring

function is essential if policy-makers are to make good decisions about whether, and if so how, active shooter drills should be routinely incorporated in school preparedness work.

HB515 also includes another important tool to empower the village – requiring schools to share information about Maryland’s child access prevention laws and laws relating to the safe storage of firearms, as well as best practices for safely securing a firearm from children. Another common sense step that will save lives – and we need look no further than the actual events in a Newport News elementary school to see why these measures to educate are needed.

Thank you for your consideration,

Lynne Harris
Montgomery County Board of Education, at-large member
Silver Spring, Md

Melissa Ladd HB 515 SENATE .docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Melissa Ladd

Position: FAV

Good afternoon Chairman Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the committee. My name is Melissa Ladd and I live in district 14. I am a volunteer with the Maryland Chapter of Moms Demand Action. I am here in support of HB 515 and I ask for a favorable report.

There is no evidence showing that active shooter drills prevent school shootings or do anything to protect school communities during an active shooter situation. Instead, we should be doing all that we can to prevent people; including students, from accessing firearms. Also, studies show that active shooter drills have a negative impact on the mental health of students.

I am a middle school teacher. At the beginning of the year, I went through all the drill scenarios with my students, including talking about what we do in the case of an active shooter. We did not do a simulation, or an actual drill, but even just talking about the possibility creates enormous anxiety for students. One of my students came up to me in tears after our discussion to ask me if we could please not discuss it again. These children have been subjected to a lifetime of constant fear and threat of school shootings, and are left to bear the emotional brunt, since adults have not solved the problem of guns in schools.

HB515 also importantly requires school districts to remind families about their responsibility to lock up their firearms. More than 80% of school shooters gain access to the weapons used at their home or the home of a friend or family member. It is only common sense that we remind families of the part they play in reducing the possibility of their weapon being accessed and used in such a way.

Mandating that school districts notify families about these drills, and do all that they can to lessen their traumatic impact is an important step. Our country is now a nation of survivors of gun violence, and we must make sure that we use trauma-informed practices for school drills.

Please move this bill out of committee before time runs out.

Thank you,
Melissa Ladd

HB0515 Testimony Navian Scarlett .pdf

Uploaded by: Navian Scarlett

Position: FAV

Good afternoon Chairman Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the committee. My name is Navian Scarlett.

I live in Frederick, MD in district 3. I am a college student.

I am here in support of HB 515, the Active Shooter Drill Notification bill, and I ask for a favorable report. I believe in this bill, because it will help students cope with the anxiety, and trauma shooting drills can induce. In my experience at Frederick High School, students would start crying from fear and anxiety, huddling in a corner trying to comfort each other, and even having panic attacks as a result. At the very least this would help inform students and parents in advance, and would prepare and prevent triggering distress in gun violence survivors. We do not need to compromise the mental health, and well being of students and staff to protect them. This would be the most ideal and reasonable way to keep everyone safe, and prepared for what can no longer be considered the unexpected, but a matter of time. We must put gun violence survivors, and those traumatized first when taking this approach.

Thank you for your time.

HB515_NikyZhuang_fav.pdf

Uploaded by: Niky Zhuang

Position: FAV

HB 515 Testimony – Public Schools – Active Shooter Safety Drills – Requirements

April 4, 2023

Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, thank you for the opportunity to present on HB 515 regarding notification requirements for active shooter drills and training. My name is Niky Zhuang, and I am a junior at Poolesville High School. I am here today to tell you all about an incident that happened at our school just two weeks ago, one that represents the reality for all the students in Maryland.

A fire broke out in our school and when the fire alarm sounded during dismissal, the teachers did not realize it and the PA system announcements announcing the fire were completely drowned out by the clamoring students. No one understood what was happening, and no one really cared, because all they wanted to do was go home. Now, Poolesville High School consists of a main building, science building, and portables; the students in the science building usually get to the bus loop by walking through the school. Because students did not realize the severity of the situation, they continued to enter the main building – the site of the fire. Any student would know better and take the long way around, but that was not the case. Imagine a fire in the building, half of the student body panicking and pushing people out of the way to leave the school, and the other half completely ignoring everyone, thinking it was a drill, and walking right back into the burning main building. After I left, I heard that fire trucks came, and students were let back into the building around thirty minutes later. I use the phrase “I heard” because the faculty at Poolesville High School never followed up with any students or parents about the incident. We attended school the next day, as if nothing had ever happened. The school

never followed up with any students or parents. This is not what I would call a safe and healthy learning environment.

Members of the committee, what I described was just a fire in the school. Now imagine the same scenario, but this time with a school shooter. A living, breathing person who can see and hear and move. Imagine what it would be like if our students walked in on a person holding a gun, thinking it was just a drill. This is why we need the Shooter Notification Bill. We need our schools to be responsible. We need our students and parents to be informed of when and what drills will happen. This bill will save lives, so students will know to avoid real emergencies. This bill will provide support, so that those with trauma and other disabilities will not be frightened by the drills. This bill will track data on efficacy to further improve the training process. As the number of school shootings increase, the flaws in our safety precautions have become more and more apparent, not just to us students, but also to those with malicious intentions. Our school drills need systemic reform, and the first step begins with HB 515. Thank you for your time.

HB515.2.10.23-2.pdf

Uploaded by: Sarah Peters

Position: FAV



Bill: **House Bill 515 - Public Schools - Active Shooter Safety Drills - Requirements**

Position: **Support**

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland School Psychologists' Association (MSPA), a professional organization representing about 500 school psychologists in Maryland. We advocate for the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic wellbeing of students and families across the state.

We support the changes to the Education Article proposed in House Bill 515 as they relate to active shooter/assailant drills in public schools. [According to the Best Practice Considerations For Armed Assailant Drills In Schools](#) document published jointly by the National Association of School Psychologists and the National Association of School Resource Officers, drills must be planned and implemented carefully so as to ensure the proper level of readiness, while balancing the potential trauma that could result from these drills. The changes proposed in HB515 align with these best practices. Specifically, the bill would ensure that drills, unless voluntary and after school hours, do not use sounds intended to imitate gunfire or explosions, role-playing as an active shooter or victim, and other potentially traumatic activities. The bill also ensures that students and staff would have access to emotional support as appropriate before, during, and after a drill, taking into account individual student needs.

If we can provide any further information or be of assistance, please contact us at legislative@mSPAonline.org or Sarah Peters at speters@hbstrategies.us or 410-322-2320.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Phipps, M.Ed., Ed.S., NCSP
Chair, Legislative Committee
Maryland School Psychologists' Association

CIF Testimony - Active Shooter Drills HB 515.pdf

Uploaded by: Woodie Kessel

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY OF THE CRITICAL ISSUES FORUM: ADVOCACY
FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
ON APRIL 4, 2023
BEFORE THE MARYLAND SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY,
AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
REGARDING HB0515 –
PUBLIC SCHOOLS - ACTIVE SHOOTER SAFETY DRILLS OR TRAININGS - REQUIREMENTS
FAVORABLE**

Honorable Chair Senator Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair Senator Cheryl C. Kagan and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

The Critical Issues Forum: *Advocacy for Social Justice* (CIF), provides this testimony in support of Public Schools - Active Shooter Safety Drills – Requirements - HB 515. This legislation provides essential requirements related to the conduct of active shooter safety drills to promote the safety of school children that are developmentally and age-appropriate. The bill also requires advance notification to parents, mental health follow-up for students and school personnel, and data collection to evaluate effectiveness of the safety drill policy and improve it as needed. The legislation also calls for the development of model content to inform parents of the State’s firearm storage laws.

Composed of Temple Beth Ami, Kol Shalom, and Adat Shalom, CIF is a coalition of synagogues that include over 1,750 families and three denominations of Judaism: Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist. CIF is a vehicle for our congregations to speak out on policy issues that relate to our shared values, including the Jewish tradition’s emphasis on the primary value of human life. Gun violence prevention is a top priority.

Firearms are the leading cause of death in children and youth ages 1 to 21 in Maryland and the United States, surpassing injuries and death from motor vehicle crashes.¹ Nationally, deaths by suicide and homicide, particularly from firearms, increase with age. In Maryland, 135 children and teens died by gun violence in 2020. This was more than twice the number of deaths from motor vehicle crashes.² Thirteen percent (13%) of the firearm deaths in Maryland were by suicide and 87% were homicides.³ It is

¹ CDC Wisqars On-line Causes of Injury-Related Death Data Base, Violence-related Firearm Deaths; Both Sexes; Age Range: <1 – 21; All Races and Ethnicity; US and Maryland; 2020.

² Ibid

³ Ibid

outrageous and intolerable that gun violence is now the leading cause of death for our children.

To help keep children safe, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), representing 67,000 pediatricians, has called for stronger common-sense firearm legislation, including strengthening background checks, supporting effective extreme risk protection orders, encouraging safe firearm storage, banning assault weapons, and addressing firearm trafficking and school shootings.⁴ Tragically there are more than 120 firearm related deaths that occur on average each day in the US, including those from mass shootings. The severe consequences of this uniquely American epidemic sadly extend far beyond the dead and wounded, their surviving families and members of their communities.

In 1975, The New York Times published an article entitled, “Violence in Schools Now Seen as Norm Across the Nation.”⁵ Nearly 50 years later, according to an article published in The Washington Post on 3/29/2023, there have been 376 school shootings since the Columbine High School massacre in 1999. The most recent school shooting was just over a week ago at The Covenant School in Nashville, Tennessee with three 9 year old children murdered and three school personnel. There were 180 children present in school that day bearing witness to the violence or cringing behind locked doors to hide from the nightmare.⁶

The AAP and we fully recognize the profoundly traumatizing consequences of all of the firearm bloodshed in our country including “increasing concerns about the risk of mass casualty events in schools throughout the United States.”⁷ The AAP recommends that children and adolescents be included in exercises and drills to advance readiness and preparedness in the same manor that fire safety or weather related threats are handled. However, the drills must be planned and conducted in a manner that is developmentally appropriate and thoughtfully attending to the potential emotional impact of participation that are evidence-based with guidance from experts. This is especially true for younger children, those who have experienced trauma in the past, and children with special health care needs. The AAP Policy Statement on “Participation of Children and Adolescents in Live Crisis Drills and Exercises” makes 11 evidence-based recommendations consistent with the provisions in Delegate Solomon’s bill.⁸ There is a

⁴ <https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/gun-violence-prevention/>

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/1975/06/14/archives/violence-in-schools-now-seen-as-norm-across-the-nation.html>

⁶ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/interactive/school-shootings-database/>

⁷ Schonfeld DJ, Melzer-Lange M, Hashikawa AN, Gorski PA; Council on Children and Disasters, Council on Injury, Violence, and Poison Prevention, Council on School Health. Participation of Children and Adolescents in Live Crisis Drills and Exercises. *Pediatrics*. 2020 Sep;146(3):e2020015503. doi: 10.1542/peds.2020-015503. PMID: 32839245

⁸ Ibid

litany of literature to establish and maintain a healthy school climate for learning and in support of the AAP findings and recommendations.^{9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16}

While HB 515 also requires advance notification to parents, mental health follow-up, and data collection, it also requires the Maryland Center on School Safety and the State Police to develop model content on the state's safe gun storage laws, which will be sent home annually by schools. The AAP reports that about one-third of American children live in homes with firearms and 43% of those households have at least 1 unlocked firearm. Thirteen percent (13%) of households with guns contain at least 1 firearm that is unlocked and loaded or stored with ammunition. Tragically, suicide attempts involving a lethal firearm are nearly always fatal (91%) compared with those involving drug overdoses (23%). The increased risk of suicide is particularly striking for younger persons where guns are stored loaded and/or unlocked.¹⁷

Marylanders, like so many other Americans, are struggling with staggering loss, isolation, and the resultant mental health impacts resulting from the COVID19 pandemic. Properly securing firearms prevents access to lethal weapons and the likelihood of unintentional firearm injury, death by suicide, and interpersonal / domestic violence. Maryland's Child Firearm Access Prevention laws focus on storing firearms securely, while still allowing gun owners reasonable access to them when needed.

HB 515 provisions are particularly important given the increased gun sales in Maryland—a more than 76% increase in the first 11 months of 2020 over 2019 as evidenced by FBI background investigations.¹⁸ Gun sales of January 2021 compared to January 2020 increased by 134 percent.¹⁹ A significant portion of those gun purchases,

⁹ Heath, M. A.; et al.: History of School Safety and Psychological First Aid for Children. Brief Treatment and Crisis Intervention. Oxford Journals. Volume 7, Number 3. Pages 206-223. 2007.

¹⁰ Zullig, K; et al: School Climate: Historical Review, Instrument Development, and School Assessment. Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment. 28(2) 139–152. © 2010 SAGE Publications

¹¹ ElSherief, M; et al: Impacts of school shooter drills on the psychological well-being of American K-12 school communities: a social media study. Humanities and Social Sciences Communications. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-021-00993-6>

¹² <https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/blog/gun-violence/17-facts-about-gun-violence-and-school-shootings/>

¹³ How Lockdown Drills Affect America's Children? <https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2021/03/us/school-shooting-lockdown-drills/>

¹⁴ Moore-Petinak, N; et al.: Active Shooter Drills in the United States: A National Study of Youth Experiences and Perceptions. Journal of Adolescent Health 67 (2020) 509e513. June 2, 2020.

¹⁵ Brock, M; Kriger, N; Miró, M.: School Safety Policies and Programs Administered by the U.S. Federal Government: 1990–2016. Office of Justice Programs' National Criminal Justice Reference Service.2018.

¹⁶ The Impact of Active Shooter Drills in Schools: Time to Rethink Reactive School Safety Strategies. <https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-impact-of-active-shooter-drills-in-schools/> February 20, 2023.

¹⁷ <https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/state-advocacy/safe-storage-of-firearms/>

¹⁸ Rising gun sales put more lives at risk | COMMENTARY; Baltimore Sun Editorial Board; Baltimore Sun; Dec 07, 2020.

¹⁹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/02/03/gun-sales-january-background-checks/>

40%, were first time gun owners who may or may not know about the best safe storage practices.²⁰

A 2017 study concluded: “Pediatric firearm injuries and deaths are an important public health problem in the United States contributing substantially each year to premature death, illness, and disability of children.”²¹ The study authors found that “most children who died of unintentional firearm injuries were shot by another child in their own age range and most often in the context of playing with a gun or showing it to others...children are curious about firearms and will touch a firearm even when instructed not to do so, which points to the importance of adult supervision and the need to store firearms safely and out of the reach of children.”⁹

Although the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that household firearms be stored safely, fewer than 1 in 3 households with children follow this guidance.²² Yet the research literature demonstrates that adherence to these guidelines by safely storing firearms can significantly reduce adolescent and young adult injuries and deaths. This study concluded that youth suicides could decline substantially if only an additional 20% of gun owning households began safely storing their firearms. A 1997 study concluded that the first 12 state laws limiting child access to firearms resulted in a 23% lower than expected number of unintentional firearm-related deaths.²³ A later study found that these laws were associated with a 10.8% reduction in firearm suicides overall and an 11.1% reduction in suicide rates for older youth age 18-20.²⁴ As this study noted, these “laws may encourage gun owners... [with young children] to adopt safe practices that endure” after their children are older, and “may increase awareness and change social norms to encourage gun owners to secure firearms...” In short, these laws can save our children’s lives.

Maryland’s leaders understood the great importance of preventing firearm access to young people when they passed our state’s current law. Now, the straightforward amendments in Jaelynn’s Law will make that law consistent with other Maryland Laws and laws in other states that require safe storage for homes with children. Further, raising the safe storage age will send an important message that storing lethal firearms safely is critical. Safe storage of medications, alcohol, toxic materials, building pool fences and securing children in car safety seats and or with seatbelts practiced diligently by parents has saved the lives of children! Securing lethal weapons safely should be no different. It is feasible, inexpensive, non-compromising and simply makes good sense. Using a biometric / pin code to open a gun safe only takes seconds similar to dialing 911 on a smartphone.

²⁰ Background Checks. A Metric for Gun Sales, Hit All-time High, Baltimore Sun, July1, 2020.

²¹ Fowler KA, Dahlberg LL, Haileuesus T, et al. Childhood Firearm Injuries in the United States. *Pediatrics*. 2017; 140(1): e20163486.

²² Monuteaux, Michael C., et al. Association of Increased Safe Household Firearm Storage with Firearm Suicide and Unintentional Death Among US Youths, *JAMA Pediatrics* , 2019; 173(7):657-662. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2019.

²³ Cummings P, Grossman DC, Rivara FP, Koepsell TD. State gun safe storage laws and child mortality due to firearms. *JAMA*. 1997; 278: 1084-1086.

²⁴ Webster, Daniel W., et al. “Association Between Youth-Focused Firearm Laws and Youth Suicides.” *JAMA*, 2004; 292: 594. doi:10.1001/jama.292.5.594

Given the increasing risk of death by suicide involving a firearm, HB 515 smartly calls for the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) in consultation with the Department of State Police, to develop and distribute model content regarding the State’s firearm storage laws.

We support this provision as safe storage laws are effective. Scientific evidence from an evaluation of over 200 combinations of policies and outcomes conclusively demonstrated that “child-access prevention laws, or safe storage laws, reduce self-inflicted fatal or nonfatal firearm injuries — including unintentional and intentional self-injuries — among youth. Evidence also supports the conclusions that such laws reduce firearm homicides among youth.”²⁵

In 1853, the outcry from the first recorded school shooting indicated “that there’s another possible way to view the hierarchy of American rights—one in which the right not to get shot [and suffer the accompanying trauma] is on par with, and may even outweigh, the right to freely carry a gun and use it.”²⁶ Sesame Street as does HB 515 offers thoughtful ways to help children and families deal with “Traumatic Experiences: First Steps to Hope.”²⁷

The CIF urges the committee to produce a favorable report supporting Senate version of House Bill 515 keep our children safe while not adding to the trauma and nightmare of school shootings in America.

²⁵ Smart, Rosanna, Andrew R. Morral, Rajeev Ramchand, Amanda Charbonneau, Jhacova Williams, Sierra Smucker, Samantha Cherney, and Lea Xenakis, *The Science of Gun Policy: A Critical Synthesis of Research Evidence on the Effects of Gun Policies in the United States*, Third Edition, RAND Corporation, RR-A243-4, 2023. As of February 1, 2023: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR-A243-4.html

²⁶ Cornell, S.: *The Lessons of a School Shooting—in 1853. How a now-forgotten classroom murder inflamed the national gun argument.* Politico. March 24, 2018

²⁷Being There: Helping Families Through Traumatic Experiences *SesameStreetInCommunities .org*

HB 515 shooter drills.pdf

Uploaded by: Dana Schulze

Position: UNF

I oppose HB 515

As a USAF combat veteran holding a BS and MA in counseling, I've worked with families, children, including incarcerated juveniles and reentry into society. I understand the importance of safe schools and with teachers partnering with the family as the basis to a flourishing society. Stop giving local decisions to the state. The role of the government is to protect the rights of the citizen to protect themselves. The local schools are the best equipped to decide how to protect their students, teachers, and families.

Dana L. Schulze, Wife, Mother
USAF Veteran
Republican State Central Committee Vice-Chairman

Oppose HB0515.pdf

Uploaded by: James Elbourn

Position: UNF

HB0515 Public Schools Active Shooter Safety Drills – Requirements

OPPOSE

Dear Committee Members:

The State Dept of Education should not be teaching shooter drills or firearms safety to our children. No doubt this training will be totally biased against the 2nd amendment. And this will further create more soft targets that embolden terrorists to come to “gun-free” zones. Put armed SROs back into schools and armed teachers if they so choose.

Thank you.

Peggy Williams
Severna Park
D31

HB 515.Active Shooter Drill Restrictions SENATE.pdf

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: UNF

BILL: House Bill 515
TITLE: Public Schools – Active Shooter Safety Drills or Trainings – Requirements
DATE: April 4, 2023
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes House Bill 515 because, even as amended, it would continue to impose unreasonably restrictive conditions on the administration of active shooter drills and trainings, mandate that schools provide mental health services to students and staff following these drills and trainings, and impose an additional unfunded mandate to distribute safe gun storage materials to all parents.

MABE is particularly concerned with the mandate to “provide” mental health follow-up for students and school personnel after an active shooter drill or training. Schools are not intended, organized or staffed in a manner suited to serving as a primary mental health provider, certainly not to staff. Therefore, MABE urges consideration of modifying this mandate to clarify that the role of the school would be to provide a mental health follow-up for students and to “provide resources to facilitate the provision of a mental health care for school personnel” after a drill or training. Similarly, the bill would require schools to “collect data on the effectiveness and psychological impact of active shooter drills and trainings.” This mandate lies wholly outside the purview of local school systems and school administrators, and would unduly burden the very school personnel dedicated to serving the mental and behavioral health needs of students.

House Bill 515 would continue to limit active shooter drills using persons portraying an active shooter, and using loud sounds, to exercises after school hours and made voluntary to any students or staff. MABE is especially concerned that such limitations could unduly limit the ability of school systems to train staff in their roles and responsibilities in preparation for responding to an actual active shooter incident. MABE supports maintaining the law and regulations governing school system emergency preparedness, including the requirements to develop emergency plans and conduct emergency drills, including active shooter drills. Local boards are concerned that the limitations imposed by House Bill 515 would unduly limit local discretion to provide the array of necessary emergency preparedness drills in conjunction with local law enforcement agencies, fire officials, and others.

The Safe to Learn Act, bipartisan legislation passed in 2018 in response to national and Maryland experiences with school shootings, called on the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), in consultation with the School Safety Subcabinet, to adopt regulations to incorporate in the annual schedule of the drills described above, developmentally and age-appropriate components of: (1) the active shooter preparedness program developed by the Department of Homeland Security or guidelines; or (2) the active shooter guidelines adopted by the Maryland Active Assailant Work Group (Ed. Art. § 7-1509). The law also provides that active shooter drills “may include developmentally and age-appropriate procedures for students or school personnel in: (1) securing classrooms; (2) barricading classrooms and school entries; (3) taking refuge in the classroom; and (4) when appropriate, escape from the classroom or school.” MABE believes these components, and the local discretion to craft exercises that cover them, strikes the appropriate balance of state guidance and local flexibility.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 515.

CRSD - Information - HB 515_Active Shooter Safety

Uploaded by: Gail Sunderman

Position: INFO

MARYLAND COALITION TO REFORM SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE HOUSE BILL 515 PUBLIC SCHOOLS – ACTIVE SHOOTER SAFETY DRILLS OR TRAININGS - REQUIREMENTS

POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

April 4, 2023

The Maryland Coalition to Reform School Discipline (“CRSD”) brings together advocates, service providers, and community members dedicated to transforming school discipline practices within Maryland’s public-school systems. We are committed to making discipline responsive to students’ behavioral needs, fair, appropriate to the infraction, and designed to keep youth on track to graduate. CRSD recognizes that school safety is paramount given the increase in school shootings. We submit this letter of information to share our member organizations experiences and concerns with active shooter drills and to bring several issues to the attention of Committee members.

There is almost no research confirming the value of active shooter drills for preventing school shootings or protecting the school community when they do occur.¹ Active shooter drills are reactive rather than proactive in preventing gun violence. In addition, when they do occur there is risk that they cause emotional distress and have other unintended negative consequences on students and educators. A national study found that 60% of student respondents to a national text message poll of youth ages 14-24 years said that drills make them feel scared, unsafe, sad, and hopeless.² Another study found that experiencing an active shooter drill in high school was associated with significant increases in student fear, inflated perceptions of risks, and a decrease in perceptions of school safety.³ Research has also identified fidelity challenges to implementing active shooter drill strategies that may contribute to emotional distress.⁴

¹ Everytown for Gun Safety (2/20/2023). *The impact of active shooter drills in schools: Time to rethink reactive school safety strategies*. Retrieved, 3/31/2032 from <https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-impact-of-active-shooter-drills-in-schools/>

Peterson, J., Sackrison, E., & Polland, A. (2015). Training students to respond to shootings on campus: Is it worth it? *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management*, 2(2), 127–138. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1037/tam0000042>

Regan, M. F. (2014). A false sense of security. *The School Administrator*, 79(5), 51-55. Retrieved from <https://www.proquest.com/openview/d82547fae4d3e0e9fc1e43ae34db3f8f/1.pdf?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=25066>

² Moore-Petinak, N., Waselewski, M., Patterson, B. A., & Chang, T. (2020). Active shooter drills in the United States: A national study of youth experiences and perceptions. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 67(4)2 509-513. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1054139X20303207>

³ Huskey, M. G. & Connell, N. M. (2021). Preparation of provocation? Student perceptions of active shooter drills. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 32(1) 3-26. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0887403419900316>

⁴ Moore-Petinak, N., Waselewski, M., Patterson, B. A., & Chang, T. (2020). Active shooter drills in the United States: A national study of youth experiences and perceptions. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 67(4)2 509-513. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1054139X20303207>

MARYLAND COALITION TO REFORM SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

While HB 515 puts some guardrails in place around active shooter drills such as notifying parents and students in advance of drills and requiring mental health support for students and educator experiencing distress, until more is known about the effectiveness of active shooter drills, we suggest that active shooter training be limited to educators and school staff, who have ultimate responsibility for carrying active shooter drills. In addition, ensuring that all schools and classrooms have the basic infrastructure used in active shooter drills, such as secure entrances and exits to school buildings, locks on classroom doors, should be a priority before requiring student participation. Better understanding of the critical components of effective shooter drills, how to successfully implement them, and how to best prepare students is also needed. And other systemic approaches and interventions, such as those that focus on school climate, providing academic support, and improving relationships among teachers, students, and their school may help foster safe and supportive learning environments.⁵ For example, school climate has been shown to be significantly correlated with a decrease in student fear and levels of perceived risk, as well as an increase in perceptions of school safety.⁶

We hope this information is helpful as the Committee considers how best to address school safety that is based on evidence of effectiveness and minimizes emotional distress.

For more information contact:

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⁵ Zullig, K. J. (2020). Active shooter drills: A closer look at next steps. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 67, 465-466. Retrieved from [https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X\(20\)30426-2/fulltext](https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X(20)30426-2/fulltext)

⁶ Huskey, M. G. & Connell, N. M. (2021). Preparation of provocation? Student perceptions of active shooter drills. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 32(1) 3-26. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0887403419900316>