

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 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.