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