



**2023 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

BILL: HB 307 – Firearm Safety – Storage Requirements and Youth Suicide Prevention (Jaelynn’s Law)
COMMITTEE: House Judiciary Committee
POSITION: Letter of Support
BILL ANALYSIS: HB 307 would change requirements for storage location of firearms and ammunition, restrict access by unsupervised child or person prohibited from firearm possession, repeals negligence provision, require development of a youth suicide prevention and firearm safe storage guide, for local health departments and others to post that guide on their websites, and make grants to conduct related education available to local health departments and others eligible to apply.

POSITION RATIONALE: The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) supports House Bill (HB) 307. HB 307 would make firearms less accessible to minors and persons prohibited from possessing firearms. The bill requires guns to be stored unloaded, in a locked container, and where unsupervised minors would not be able to easily access them. It requires ammunition to be stored securely. Persons who violate these requirements would be subject to fines and/or imprisonment. Additionally, the bill amends existing law, such that violating these requirements could be considered negligent. The bill also requires the Deputy Secretary for Public Health Services to develop a “youth suicide prevention and firearms safe storage guide” and would make grant funds available to local health departments and other organizations to provide education to families on safe firearms storage. *HB 307 has the potential to be lifesaving, as it could prevent young people from harming themselves – either accidentally or in an attempt to take their own lives.*

Suicide is the third leading cause of death for young people ages 10-24 in the United States.¹ For 10-14-year-olds, it is the second leading cause.¹ Reducing access to lethal means is one of the most effective ways to prevent suicide.² Nearly a quarter of people who attempt suicide go from considering the action to attempting to kill themselves in *as little as five minutes*.³ Making weapons more difficult to access can delay suicide attempts, give people time to reconsider their actions, and give family members more time to intervene. The education funded by the grants made available by this bill could give families the resources to support their children and provide an avenue through which to seek professional help.

While suicide is a complex problem that must be addressed through a multi-pronged approach (e.g., a safe and supportive home environment, access to mental health care, and community and peer support), removing an easily accessible means to commit suicide is a crucial step. Local health departments are willing and able to post the developed guide on their websites and are interested in the funding availability to conduct related education.

For these reasons, the Maryland Association of County Health Officers submits this LOS for HB 307. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at rmaiora1@jhu.edu or 410-937-1433.

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¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). Suicide Prevention – Facts About Suicide. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/facts/index.html>

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). Suicide Prevention – Prevention Strategies. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/prevention/index.html#print>

³ Harvard T.H. Tan School of Public Health. (2023). Means Matter – Duration of Suicidal Crises. Retrieved from <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/duration/>