

February 7, 2023

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and other members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

The National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a statewide network of more than 45,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations, and service providers. NAMI Maryland is a non-profit that is dedicated to providing education, support, and advocacy for persons with mental illnesses, their families and the wider community.

A Voluntary Do Not Sell Firearms Registry is a completely voluntary process in which an individual may request to be placed on a Do Not Sell Firearm Registry that prohibits them from obtaining firearms. An individual may request, at any time, to be removed from the registry. 21 days after the request, they are removed from the Do Not Sell Registry and are again able to purchase firearms should they choose to do so.

NAMI supports laws and policies that prevent unwanted use of firearms and self-harm. In 2020, suicide accounted for over half of the gun related deaths in the United States<sup>1</sup>. Firearms are particularly lethal; approximately 90% of gun suicide attempts result in death<sup>2</sup>. Limiting access to a means of suicide plays a significant role in prevention.

When someone is experiencing a mental health crisis, their judgment is clouded. This legislation will allow someone, while in a stable state of mind, to acknowledge they may experience a future mental health emergency. A Do Not Sell Registry allows individuals to prepare for a potential crisis before it occurs. Placing themselves on this registry ensures that they will not impulsively buy a firearm that will cause themselves, their families, and their communities harm and trauma. 70% of people who made the decision to commit suicide took less than one hour between the decision and the actual suicide attempt<sup>3</sup>. Most suicidal crises are brief, so delaying firearms purchases will allow people in crisis the opportunity to reconsider their decisions post-crisis.

When guns are less available, fewer people will die from gun-related suicides. There will be a greater number of people with the ability to reconsider their decisions- and “90% of people who attempt suicide and survive never go on to die by suicide.”<sup>4</sup>

A Do Not Sell Registry is a voluntary way to prevent nonsensical gun deaths in the State by allowing people to be proactive about their life and personal safety. For these reasons, NAMI MD urges a favorable report.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/02/03/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-u-s/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://everytownresearch.org/report/firearm-suicide-in-the-united-states/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1521/suli.32.1.5.49.24212>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/the-british-journal-of-psychiatry/article/fatal-and-nonfatal-repetition-of-selfharm/721FD68B3030C46E2070CC08CA869523>