SB0159:

Firearms - Maryland Voluntary Do Not Sell Firearm Registry - Establishment

FAVORABLE

Good afternoon Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice Chair, and members of the committee. My name is Bryan Barks, and I am a writer based in Baltimore. I would like to thank the committee for considering this testimony in support of SB0159.

I live with bipolar disorder. I was diagnosed when I was 19 years old. During depressive and mixed episodes, I often experience suicidality. When I am well – which is most of the time – I desperately want to protect my life.

A few years ago, during a mood episode with mixed features, I researched where to buy a gun. When I was well, I advocated for policies that could prevent firearm suicide. But when I was ill – suicidal, sleep-deprived, and agitated – that part of myself disappeared. My unwell self was so loud.

Luckily, there was a help-seeking part of me that was louder. I consulted with my psychiatrist and admitted myself to the hospital. I survived my crisis. Too many others do not.

People who recognize that they are prone to suicidality, do not already own guns, and do not want to be able to obtain guns in a suicidal crisis need this tool. This bill would give people prone to suicidality the agency to make decisions about their own access to guns when they are not actively suicidal.

Though the do-not-sell firearm registry would be a new tool in Maryland, self-regulation is not a novel concept. Maryland allows those who struggle with problem gambling to voluntarily ban themselves from casinos. Similarly, a do-not-sell firearms registry would allow individuals with insight into their risk for suicide to preempt self-destructive urges.

Like those who may oppose this bill, I value the ability to defend myself. For me, self-defense means defending myself from my illness. It means *not* owning a gun. It means knowing I can preemptively put a barrier between myself and the most lethal method of suicide. Please, give Marylanders like me this tool to defend ourselves from firearm suicide.