

**SB159: Firearms – Maryland Voluntary Do Not Sell Firearm Registry -
Establishment
Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 7, 2023
Position: SUPPORT**

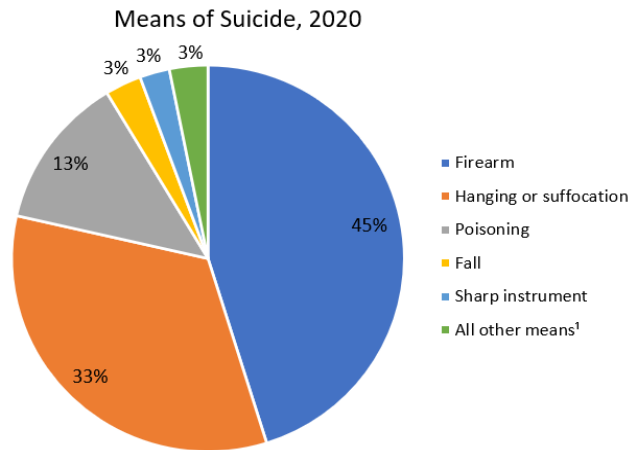
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My name is Eileen Zeller and in retirement, I chair the Maryland Governor’s Commission on Suicide Prevention and serve on the board of directors of the Mental Health Association of Maryland. But I am submitting this testimony representing only myself.

I retired from the federal government’s Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in 2018, where I was Lead Public Health Advisor in the Suicide Prevention Branch. In that role I managed a team of public health professionals responsible for national grant programs including the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, Suicide Prevention Resource Center, and a range of state, tribal, and campus suicide prevention programs.

I support SB159 because it can save lives, while respecting the autonomy of people who are struggling with suicidal thoughts.

In all 50 states, including Maryland, the most common method of suicide is firearms. If we had been able to prevent all firearm suicides in 2020^{1,2}, 260 lives would have been saved.



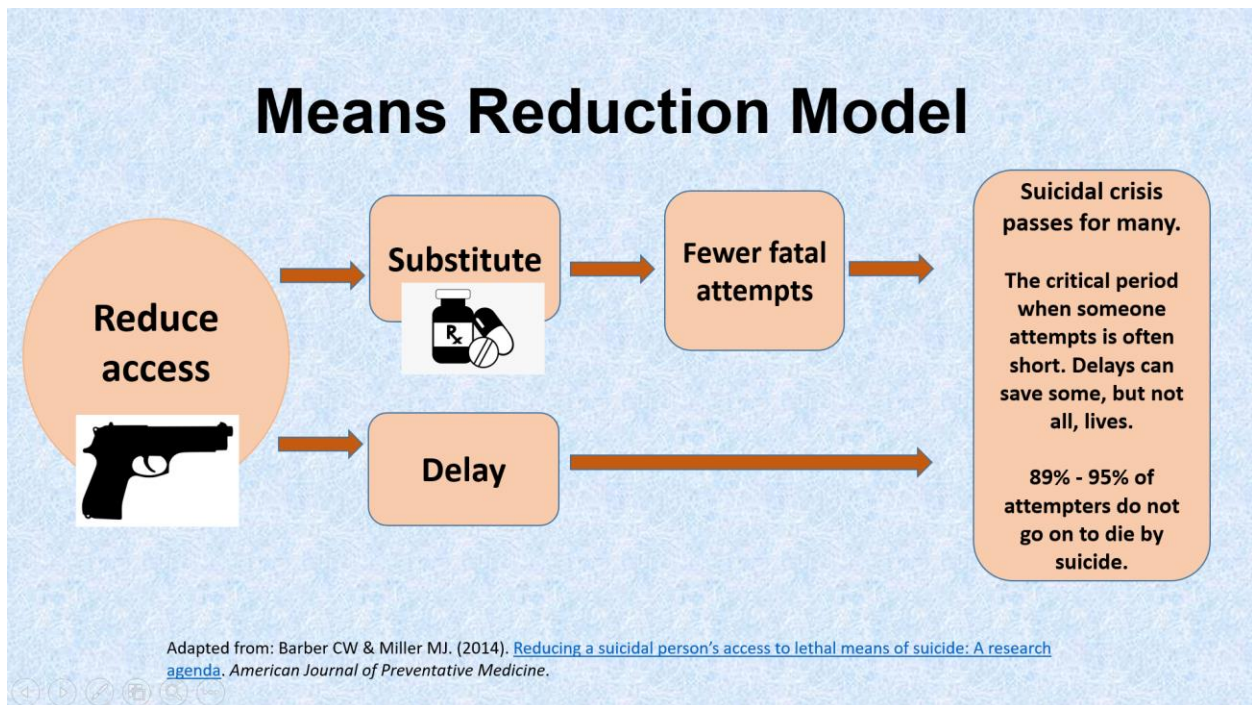
¹All other means includes: drowning, explosive, fire or burns, motor vehicle, and other.

¹ WISQARS: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [online].

² Governor’s Commission on Suicide Prevention. Maryland Suicide Prevention Plan 2022-2024. Submitted to the Office of the Governor December 1, 2022.

Research shows that the decision to attempt suicide can be a powerful, but brief impulse during a short-term crisis. Many studies that interview people who survive suicide attempts report that—although those individuals may have considered suicide days, weeks, and months before the attempt—the actual decision to kill themselves was made hours or in as little as 5 minutes before the attempt.

If we can prevent access to a firearm during that brief period of impulsivity, we can drastically reduce the lethality of the attempt and the chance that that person will ever go on to die by suicide. (See evidence-based model below.) And giving suicidal people a tool like the Voluntary Do Not Sell Firearm Registry, allows them to keep themselves safe in moments of crisis.



I therefore urge a favorable report on SB159.