

Testimony 2/15/23 Maryland Legislature

Good afternoon. My name is Rev. Katie Day and I live in Cambridge, Md. I would like to speak on behalf of HB307, Jaelynn's Law.

My husband and I retired to the Eastern Shore from Philadelphia. As you know, Philadelphia has a very high rate of gun violence, and I was involved in faith-based efforts there to advocate for stronger gun laws. We were looking forward to being in a state with lower levels of gun violence as a result of its commonsense gun laws.

However, we have seen the numbers of shootings and gun deaths rise in our state, and most tragically, of children injured or killed by guns. Even in our small city of Cambridge, gun deaths spiked last year (from 1 or 2 a year to 6 in 2022), including a 5 year old child.

Jaelynn's law is a small but important step in protecting our kids. The Eastern Shore is hunting country and I know that overwhelmingly most hunters secure their weapons. But some gun owners here also say, "We don't need new gun laws—we should just enforce the ones we have." Unfortunately, the existing law on gun storage is vague and unenforceable. If it were strong enough, we would not be seeing the numbers of kids getting access to guns to deadly effect on the rise. There were 23% MORE children (0-17) injured or killed by guns in 2022 than in 2021. This is alarming and should be unacceptable.

Without taking every step we can to protect our kids, what are we saying? That our guns are more important to us than our children? That the violence they must endure is just the price we're willing to pay for not taking gun storage with utmost seriousness?

Our children are already burdened with more worries and trauma than we all had growing up. Passing Jaelynn's Law adds an extra layer of protection for these young lives.