

The Baltimore Sun has reported on the shooting in Woodlawn that killed four people, including one of the survivors, Shyam Adhikari. Adhikari, shot in his right leg before the police arrived, still struggles to walk a year after the incident. The shooting incident highlights the inadequacy of policies in place in Maryland to assist those who may be experiencing mental health crises. Here are the few articles:

‘I just closed my eyes, and he shot the gun’: Survivor recounts Woodlawn gunman’s 2021 rampage, calls for reevaluation of ‘red flag’ laws

By [Christine Condon](#)
Baltimore Sun

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Shyam Adhikari thought he was going to die outside his home on the morning of May 8, 2021.

His neighbor was on a shooting rampage, and as Adhikari knelt in the grass beside his wounded friend, the gun was trained on him.

Adhikari was shot in his right leg before police officers arrived and shot and killed his neighbor: [56-year-old Everton Brown](#).

The shooting in Woodlawn killed three others and left Adhikari with lasting injuries. Even as the one-year anniversary of the incident draws near, Adhikari said he struggles to stand up without assistance and cannot walk for longer than 30 minutes at a time.

The incident [raised painful questions](#) about policies in place in Maryland to assist those who may be experiencing mental health crises. Brown had extensive contact with law enforcement during his years in Woodlawn. He [called the police more than 120 times](#) to complain that he was being surveilled by the federal government, to report altercations with his neighbors, to claim that items had been stolen from his house.

The Baltimore County Mobile Crisis Team stopped by Brown’s home more than once for wellness checks, and at least one neighbor [filed a peace order against him](#). But none of that was enough to prevent tragedy.

Adhikari spoke last week in favor of a bill before the Maryland General Assembly that would convene a working group to reassess Maryland’s extreme risk gun law, including representatives from the relevant state agencies, law enforcement and health professionals.

The existing law, which took effect in 2018, allows officials to take firearms away from those deemed to pose an immediate risk to themselves or others for up to one year at a time. Family

members, cohabitants, medical professionals and law enforcement officials can petition the court to initiate the process. The law, commonly called Maryland's "red flag" law, was [one of the most-used of its kind in the country](#) just a few years after its passage.

This year's bill, sponsored by Del. Harry Bhandari of Baltimore County, is named after [Sagar Ghimire](#), Adhikari's friend who died that day. A couple, [Ismael Quintanilla and Sara Alacote](#), also were killed. Ghimire, a 24-year-old from Nepal, had just graduated from Claflin University in South Carolina and moved to the Parkview Crossing townhome complex in Woodlawn when the shooting occurred.

"His family was left to wonder why — if the clues were there — there was no action taken, which might have prevented this incident," said Bhandari, a Democrat. "This bill would take a step toward providing that answer."

The bill is supported by the office of Baltimore County Executive Johnny Olszewski Jr., and by [Ghimire's family in Nepal](#). During last week's hearing, a representative read a letter from the family.

"May the government and administration get inspiration to be aware and take additional remedial measures to mitigate the brutal violence like the one my son and many sons of innocent parents have faced," it read.

For any hope of passage this year, the bill would need to be approved by the House of Delegates by Monday, but it remains in committee and so it has a steep hill to climb. But Bhandari said he plans to continue pushing for the measure in future legislative sessions if needed.

"This is a complicated case touching on many critical issues, and I understood from the start that there would not be an easy solution," he said in a statement. "While I am hoping that my colleagues will help me pass HB 1344 this year, I am ready to take advantage of an additional year to prepare an even stronger bill."

Adhikari was the first one in his home to wake up that morning in May when an explosion rocked Brown's townhouse next door.

When he saw flames engulfing his neighbor's home, Adhikari roused his housemates and helped them evacuate. Ghimire tried to rescue the two international students' all-important travel documents from their home but couldn't find Adhikari's. So Adhikari went in himself to retrieve them, leaving Ghimire in the parking lot.

When he returned, Adhikari saw Ghimire lying on the ground and rushed to his side.

"I thought he just got faint because I didn't hear any gunshots until that time," Adhikari said. "And I just pulled his body and brought it to the grass part and just kept his head in my lap, and I just told him, 'Just wake up, Sagar. Wake up.'"

Suddenly, Brown approached the pair, gun in hand.

“At the time, I couldn’t do anything else,” Adhikari said. “I thought: That’s the end of my life. And I just closed my eyes, and he shot the gun.”

Then, as police approached, Brown ran away. Four officers fired at Brown and killed him.

Recovering from the injury to his leg has been trying, Adhikari told legislators during the hearing.

“It’s been already eight, nine months, and I’m still on bed rest,” Adhikari said.

He and Ghimire first met back in 2013 while attending high school in Kathmandu. They moved to the Baltimore area together in hopes of applying to local graduate schools. But the shooting changed everything.

Now, Adhikari lives in Fairfield, Ohio, with his wife, who is helping him recover from his injury. Adhikari said he does not have health insurance, so he hasn’t been able to afford the physical therapy his doctors recommended. But he does what he can to strengthen his leg from home and said it has begun to improve.

For the first few years, evaluating Maryland’s “red flag” law — which aims to prevent tragedies like what happened in Woodlawn — was made more difficult by confidentiality provisions, which shielded some of the data from public view, said Shannon Frattaroli, a professor in the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health who studies the measure.

Last year, the Maryland General Assembly updated the law to allow for greater data-sharing between the courts and researchers, Frattaroli said. Her team at Hopkins is just beginning to assess additional data about extreme risk protection orders, including more information on who most often petitions for the protective orders and whether they’re most often used to protect against self-harm or harm to others.

“I definitely appreciate the attention from [Del. Harry Bhandari] on the need to have a work group,” she said. “But any group that does that needs to have those recommendations informed by data. And that just became possible less than a year ago. And the process of going through those data takes time.”

That being said, there are discussions about modifying the law, perhaps to make it easier for medical professionals and other eligible groups to petition courts by allowing for virtual testimony, Frattaroli said.

In Brown’s case, it was neighbors who frequently flagged his behavior; they are not eligible to file an extreme risk protective order under Maryland law.

“Back during the legislative process, there was some movement to try to extend the protective order petitioners,” said Montgomery County Sheriff Darren Popkin, who helped to craft

Maryland's law and train police departments to use it. "But there was some real concern about neighbors — somebody who wasn't even familiar with a person — getting one of these ERPOs."

Several of Brown's interactions with Baltimore County's [Mobile Crisis Team](#), made up of specially trained plainclothes police officers and mental health professionals, occurred before the "red flag" law was even in place.

In November 2015, the team responded to his home because he had made several complaints to county officials that the FBI was harassing him and had stolen his tooth, according to a police report.

Maryland's extreme risk gun law is purposefully specific, Popkin said. The person must show that they present an imminent danger to the community, perhaps by threatening to use a firearm against themselves or others. Although peace orders can be obtained to address disputes between individuals, taking someone's firearms away must meet a greater threshold, Popkin said. So, too, does taking someone for an emergency evaluation at the hospital.

Mandating that someone who receives an extreme risk protective order also receive a mental health evaluation would be a risky proposal, Frattaroli said.

"We risk stigmatizing people with mental illness when we draw too bright of a line between mental illness and violence," she said. "ERPO laws were written very clearly to focus on dangerous behaviors — and not diagnoses of mental illness."

Popkin said he believes Maryland's law is working, what with hundreds of orders granted each year, but he would welcome any opportunity to reevaluate it.

"Any time you're putting a group of people together — especially with the list of members that would consist this work group — only potential good things can come," he said.