

Brady
840 First St. NE Ste. 400
Washington, DC 20002



Testimony of Ramya Swami, Manager, State Policy, Brady
Support for HB 0162 [FAV]
Before the Maryland House Judiciary Committee
February 1, 2023

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon and distinguished members of the Maryland House Judiciary Committee,

Founded in 1974, Brady works across Congress, courts, and communities, uniting gun owners and non-gun owners alike to end America's gun violence epidemic. Our organization today carries the name of Jim Brady, who was shot and severely injured in the assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan. Jim and his wife, Sarah, led the fight to pass federal legislation requiring background checks for gun sales. Brady continues to uphold Jim and Sarah's legacy by uniting Americans across the country in the fight to prevent gun violence. There are evidence-based policy solutions that we know will help to prevent gun violence in Maryland.

The bill before you today, HB 0162, will save lives by allowing proactive individuals in fear of harming themselves to voluntarily add themselves to a list of people who are prohibited from purchasing firearms. **For this reason, Brady strongly urges the House Judiciary Committee to pass HB 0162.**

With HB 0162, Maryland would follow the State of Washington's lead in introducing a voluntary waiver as a suicide prevention tool. Each year, 265 people in Maryland die by firearm suicide.¹ Firearms are the most lethal method used in suicide deaths, with a fatality rate of approximately 90 percent.² Frequently, the decision to harm oneself is oftentimes made abruptly: A quarter of individuals who attempt suicide make the attempt within 5 minutes of deciding to end their lives.³ This means that putting barriers in place to prevent easy access to lethal means can delay a suicide attempt in the event of a crisis, giving someone who is struggling more time to seek help. In fact, 46% of people at high risk of suicide at the University

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [online]. (2005) [cited 2022 Jan 25]. Available from URL: www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars

² Matthew Miller, "The Epidemiology of Case Fatality Rates for Suicide in the Northeast*1." *Annals of Emergency Medicine* 43, no. 6 (2004): 723–30.

³ Simon, Olga Von, Alan C. Swann, Kenneth E. Powell, Lloyd B. Potter, M-j Kresnow and Patrick O'Carroll. "Characteristics of impulsive suicide attempts and attempters." *Suicide & life-threatening behavior* 32 1 Suppl (2001): 49-59.

of Alabama Medical Center indicated they would voluntarily enroll themselves onto a firearm purchase delay list.⁴ This bill provides avenues for individuals who may be struggling with suicidal ideation to take action to keep themselves safe from firearms and will help prevent suicides in the State of Maryland.

Simply stated, this bill will save lives. Brady thanks Vice Chair Moon for his sponsorship of this bill and strongly encourages the House Judiciary Committee to vote in favor of HB 0162.

Sincerely,
Ramya Swami

⁴ Vars FE, McCullumsmith CB, Shelton RC, Cropsey KL. Willingness of Mentally Ill Individuals to Sign Up for a Novel Proposal to Prevent Firearm Suicide. *Suicide Life Threat Behav.* 2017 Aug;47(4):483-492. doi: 10.1111/sltb.12302. Epub 2016 Oct 5. PMID: 27704597.