

**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the Maryland House Ways and Means Committee - For the Hearing on Public Schools - Active Shooter Safety Drills - Requirements (HB515) February 15, 2023 SUPPORT**

Research from Everytown for Gun Safety concludes that there is almost no evidence firming the value of active shooter drills for preventing school shootings or protecting the school community when shootings do occur. Research does suggest, however, that active shooter drills in schools are associated with increased rates of depression, stress and anxiety, and overall physiological health problems for students. These harmful effects have been found in children as young as five years old up to high school, parents, and teachers. And as the mother of two children in elementary school, I can speak to this from experience.

This bill mandates important steps to help mitigate the potentially traumatic effects of active shooter drills including - requiring local school systems to inform parents of their active shooter drill schedule to help parents and student prepare for a drill which will help to reduce children's anxiety associated with such drills, involving mental health professionals in the creation of age-and developmentally appropriate content, and identifying staff and students who may need support during and after the drills, such as individuals with recent trauma or loss, individuals with disabilities, and others, and provide those individuals with coping strategies and additional resources to successfully complete and respond to the drills.

And perhaps most importantly for me personally, is the requirement that at the beginning of each school year, schools send home information on Maryland's firearm storage laws and best practices for firearm storage. In the US, firearms are the leading cause of death for children. 4.6 million children in the US live in a household with at least one **loaded and unlocked** gun. When there are firearms in the homes of children they should always be stored unloaded, locked and preferably in a gun safe. Preventing access to guns is paramount to reducing gun violence. The secret service has found that three-quarters of school shooters acquired their firearm from the home of a parent or close relative. Lets remove school shootings from the narrative altogether and prevent childhood access to guns in the home.

I strongly urge this committee to issue a favorable report on HB515.

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