

Hello members of the Ways and Means committee,

My name is Nina Atrokhov, and I am currently a junior at Bethesda Chevy Chase HS in Montgomery County. I am here today encouraging you to support House Bill #515.

Lockdown drills are terrifying. A few times each year students participate in a drill where they have to prepare if there is an active shooter in the school. Teachers lock the doors, close the blinds, turn off the lights, and students go as far away from sight as possible; all of this in preparation, in case one day this danger becomes a reality. Huddled next to all your classmates, many of our minds go to the thought of what if this wasn't a drill. You hear the door handle shake, your teacher looking at all the students with sadness in their eyes, a student crying in the corner, and you feel the anxiety behind all the soft chatter. HB 515 will allow students to mentally prepare for the emotional burden of a lockdown drill and receive the help they need to be able to attempt to grasp the situation. This will allow parents to have a conversation about the drill and be there to support their children. Gun violence in schools is sadly a reality for many, this year in many schools around the state students have been having to go into real lockdowns. In many of these scenarios it is not clear if the lockdown is real or a drill. This year my school was put on a real lockdown, they had believed that someone brought a gun into school. I was taking a test in my 5th period class when they announced the lockdown and my teacher, believing it was a drill, made us continue at our desks. My phone kept ringing with frightened texts from my friends, my sister. Thankfully, there wasn't a gun. However, if there was, I would have been an easy target. If this bill was in place my teacher would have known that it was not a drill because we all would have known in advance if it was. This bill will not only help make these drills more manageable, but it will save lives. Therefore, I encourage you to support Bill #515.

Thank you for your time.