

Good afternoon Delegates,

My name is Nick Dimitriadis. I'm a proud student at Towson High School and a candidate for Student Member of the Board of Education of Baltimore County. I'm thrilled and honored today to testify before you in support of HB515, Delegate Solomon's legislation to create greater transparency, communication, and student support as it relates to our schools' active shooter drills.

For so many students across Maryland, and nationally, right now, the need for comprehensive active shooter drills has become increasingly important. For me personally, this issue hits close to home.

Just a few months ago, the Towson High School community experienced a wave of threats against students, parents, and staff that left our community shaken for several weeks. What stunned me just as much as the threats themselves, however, was the lack of communication between our school and our students and families that deeply deteriorated not only the academic success and social and emotional well-being of our students, but the relationship between our school's leaders and community members. Just weeks ago, we had our first active shooter drill of the year, and while I'm appreciative of the progress we have made in Baltimore County to build more communication, it goes without saying that there is much work to be done across our district and ones throughout Maryland to make our drill process more effective.

HB515 is an exhaustive proposal to systematically improve the process by which students are prepared to respond to the threat of an active shooter while in school. Whether it be requiring schools to identify staff and students who may need support during and after drills, informing families and school personnel in advance of them occurring, or tracking data about their efficacy and effects on staff, students, and parents, this bill is a step in the right direction for building stronger, safer schools across Maryland. Now more than ever, amidst a recent surge in school violence throughout our state, I hope you'll support this crucial legislation that puts student's safety and wellness at the forefront of bettering our educational systems. Thank you for your time and consideration.