

Before the House Ways and Means Committee

HB0515 - Public Schools - Active Shooter Safety Drills - Requirements

SUPPORT

Good evening delegates and audience.

It's an honor to have the opportunity to advocate for my support of HB515 with such a distinguished audience of amazing people. My name is Kiana Hajikarimloo and I am a sophomore at Northwest high school, in Montgomery county.

I clearly remember my first day of school in America. I was a freshman and didn't know anything about the American school system. Everything was new to me and I was trying to look at other students to learn what to do and where to go. Everything seemed very interesting to me and I was so excited that I finally got to attend school in America. After the first two weeks of school, I was in my volleyball class, talking to one of my new friends when I heard several alarms around the gym. I was shocked and didn't know what to do. "What is going on?" I asked my friend. "This is a shooter safety drill. Don't be scared. This is just practice." She told me calmly. I thought about my parents and texted them. Nobody knew what was going on at the school. Some people were saying this is an actual lockdown but other people were saying it is just a drill. But I wondered why? Why didn't the staff, parents, and students have a schedule for shooter safety drills? That afternoon, around 5 o'clock the principal sent an email that it was an actual lockdown and there was an active shooter on the campus. Still, when I think about that day I feel terrified. What if something happened to any of the students that day?

We all know that gun violence is a critical issue in the U.S., but it is not going anywhere. The only thing that we can do is to better prepare ourselves for these situations by providing notice to parents, guardians, students, and school staff about drill schedules. It is our right especially as students to know what is exactly going on in school. In 2022, there have been 32 gun incidents at either elementary, middle, or high school in Maryland. This is an issue that needs to be addressed as soon as possible and the most effective way is to adopt HB515 which prepares schools and students for these situations. By adopting HB515 to incorporate drills in the annual schedule for Maryland local schools, Maryland provides safety and preparation for students across the state so there would be fewer gun violence incidents in schools.

Gun violence shouldn't be something that we are worried about in the 21st century. Every student deserves to go to school without any fear of getting killed in a place that was supposed to be an educational environment. As students, our main issue should be about grades and tests, not guns and deaths. After all, isn't it better to be safe and prepared than to be sorry?

Thank you for your time.