

Before the House Ways and Means Committee
HB0515 - Active Shooter Drill Notification Act

SUPPORT

Good afternoon committee members and Chair Atterbeary,

My name is Nico D'Orazio, and I am a Junior from Thomas S. Wootton High School in District 17. I am here today advocating for the support of HB0515, regarding active shooter safety drills.

Last week, my school held an unannounced fire drill, and my mind immediately began preparing for the worst. My peers and I were worried that a school shooter had pulled the fire alarm and that our lives were in danger. Though this was only a fire drill, the fears that my peers and I experienced were unmatched by our fears when we undergo an active shooter drill. I can vividly remember my fear that these shooter drills could be real, and the deep anxiety they caused for my peers and me. The bitter reality of today is that these fears exist everyday for students, and are only amplified during an active shooter drill. Without mental health resources at hand after a drill, time and time again we have had to cope with these stressors on our own.

Notifying students and parents before conducting an active shooter drill is a necessity for the sanctity of Maryland students' mental health. Rather than permanently traumatizing students with worries of their own lives, HB0515 provides students the opportunity to practice lifesaving procedures and access mental health resources. When students are notified beforehand, they can emotionally prepare and intentionally practice lockdown techniques. Furthermore, with mental health resources provided after a drill, HB0515 provides a channel for students to work through

any emotional distress caused by an active shooter drill. Had HB515 been in place during the active shooter drills my peers and I have gone through, we would not have had to cope with the stress of an active shooter on our own.

Opponents of this bill state that active shooter drills with prior warnings will be ineffective and students will not treat them as important. However, students of today understand the seriousness and potentiality of a school shooter, signifying that students would treat drills as important. Moreover, because HB0515 requires the Maryland Center for School Safety to collect data on the effectiveness of these drills, we can ensure that the drills truly serve Maryland's students. The purpose of every active shooter drill is to train, not to traumatize. Therefore, I urge you to vote in favor of HB0515 in order to truly support the over 800,000 students of Maryland.

Thank you for your time and consideration.