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Good afternoon, Chairman Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan and members of the committee, my name is Natalie Vinski.

I live in Columbia, in District 12a, in Senator Lam's District.

I'm also a survivor of gun violence and the mother of a survivor of gun violence.

I am here in support of SB 432 and I ask for a favorable report.

Two years ago, my son Walter and I experienced a shooting near our home, an incident that left lasting scars on both of us. Walter, who was just four at the time, was diagnosed with anxiety soon after, a condition we continue to navigate.

Fast forward to this past September, as Walter started kindergarten at our local elementary school. In the first week of the quarter, an email from the school principal caught my attention. The students had participated in a drill earlier that day. Concerns flooded my mind - What kind of drill? How did Walter cope? What other drills were scheduled? Would there be lockdown or active shooter drills? Most importantly, who would be there to address his questions and alleviate his anxiety?

The principal agreed to meet and discuss my concerns. They provided me with details about the drills and the scheduled dates. A conversation with Walter's teacher assured me that the drills were handled with age-appropriate language. The school counselor agreed to be present in Walter's classroom during the drill and to follow up afterward. As a parent, I felt reassured, knowing that if my child had to participate in a drill, he would be fully supported on multiple levels and I believe that ALL children and families in Maryland deserve this same assurance.

If our state law mandates active shooter drills for our children, it only makes sense that we minimize the traumatic impact for them to the fullest extent possible. The necessity of SB 432 is clear to me, to Walter, and to all families and children in the state of Maryland.

Thank you for your time.