



OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR BALTIMORE CITY

March 11, 2025

The Honorable Senator Will C. Smith Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support of SB1031 – Criminal Law - Child's Access to Firearms - Penalty (Ny'Kala Strawder Act)

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

As the State's Attorney for Baltimore City, I write in strong support of SB1031, which is a key legislative agenda item for my office, and something prosecutors across the state will tell you is a loophole in the current law that needs to be addressed immediately.

My Chief of Felony Firearms and Drug Trafficking, Jennifer Brady, has submitted testimony on behalf of our office in favor of this bill, so I won't take up much of your time going over the specifics of the bill and what it would change. However, I would urge you to read her testimony, as she was the prosecutor who had to figure out a way to hold the irresponsible grandparent of a nine year old accountable for leaving her legal service weapon in an unsecure location, which led to the untimely death of a fifteen year old angel, Ny'Kala Strawder.

And while I won't get into the legal specifics of why this bill is imperative, especially after witnessing a 10-year old die at the hands of another unsecure firearm laying around the home two months ago. However, I would rather leave you with the words of her beloved family member Donyette McCray, who like her siblings, extended family members and friends, continues to suffer through the pain and grief that comes with losing someone to gun violence, especially someone so young through no fault of their own.

So I urge you to support this important legislation, helping prosecutors across the state truly be able to hold irresponsible individuals like this accountable for their actions. SB1031 will truly be a blessing for so many people in this state, including the Strawder family, but one that I pray we will never have to use in the future. I leave you with the heartfelt words of Ms. McCray as you consider your vote on SB1031. Thanks for your time.



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Dear Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee ,

On August 6th, 2022, my world was turned upside down when I lost my beloved great niece/daughter, Nykayla, to gun violence. Her death was the result of someone not properly securing their firearm, a tragic oversight that has haunted me and my family every single day.

Because of this failure, I am now left to navigate life without her, and I can't help but wonder how many other families are experiencing similar grief due to preventable gun-related tragedies. In December 2022, in honor of Nykayla, I made the decision to start an organization dedicated to creating safe spaces for children to play and grow. Our mission is to ensure that no child has to face the dangers of unsecured firearms and to provide communities with resources and education about safe gun storage.

Since Nykayla's death, I've been heartbroken to see an increased number of children dying due to firearms that are not properly locked away or stored out of reach. This year 2025, Nykayla would have been turning 18 years old. She had so much potential and so much life left to live, but because of someone's failure to secure their weapon, she is no longer with us.

I ask you to take action on SB1031 to prevent this senseless gun violence from happening to other families. It is crucial that we pass laws requiring proper firearm storage and raise awareness about the dangers of leaving firearms unsecured, especially around children.

I urge you to take meaningful steps to protect our children and ensure that tragedies like mine don't continue to devastate families. Thank you for your attention regarding this critical issue. I trust that you will make the right decisions that will create safer communities and protect the lives of our future generations.

Sincerely, Donyette McCray
kway15.4all@gmail.com

We respectfully urge this committee, and the members of the Maryland General Assembly, to support SBO181.



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Sincerely,

Ivan J. Bates

Ivan J. Bates
State's Attorney for Baltimore City

Submitted By: Hassan Giordano
Chief, External Affairs Division