

Testimony:

Good afternoon. Chairman Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher and members of the committee, my name is Dr. Nicole Hollywood.

I live in Salisbury Maryland, in district 37, Senator Mautz's District. I am a volunteer with the Eastern Shore Local Group of the Maryland Chapter of Moms Demand Action.

I'm also a survivor of gun violence, a gun owner, a mother, and a college educator.

I am here in support of SB 943 and I ask for a favorable report because I know first hand what it is like to have my children and I repeatedly controlled, threatened, and terrorized by an armed abuser and that individuals fleeing domestic violence face a multitude of barriers, chief among them being a lack of clarity and enforcement of firearm prohibitions for perpetrators of domestic violence.

My ex-husband, during one of his many black-out drunk moments, held a gun to one of my son's head. My son was only nine years old at the time. After we separated, he started breaking into my house while armed. Ultimately, I got a restraining order. However, when the judge ordered him to turn in all of his firearms, he only gave up one, despite having an arsenal. There was never any follow up from law enforcement.

Guns amplify the coercive power and control dynamics inherent in abusive intimate relationships. Unfortunately, individuals fleeing domestic violence face a multitude of barriers, chief among them being a lack of clarity and enforcement of firearm prohibitions for perpetrators of domestic violence. This puts the lives of survivors at risk, making them feel hopeless and neglected by a system that is supposed to protect them.

This bill would strengthen Maryland law to make sure that firearms are kept out of the hands of domestic abusers when their victims first seek protection from a court through an interim or temporary protective order, which is an incredibly dangerous time for victims. Additionally, the bill would also ensure courts give clear and specific guidance to respondents of protective orders about firearm surrender requirements.

There should be no ambiguities in the process of disarming domestic abusers. Intimate partner violence and gun violence are inextricably linked. Guns exacerbate violent and abusive situations. Every month, an average of 76 women in the US are shot and killed by an intimate partner—and nearly 6 million women reported having a gun used against them by an intimate partner. Abusers with firearms are five times more likely to kill their female victims. We need to do everything that we can to keep our loved ones safe – and ensure that our laws are equipped to successfully disrupt abusers' access to guns, and save lives.

Thank you for your time.

If asked a question:

I came to testify today as a constituent in support of SB 943 and I am not a policy expert, so I can't speak to that question.

TALKING POINTS

Family & Law Enforcement Protection Act - SB 943

- This bill would strengthen Maryland law to make sure that firearms are kept out of the hands of domestic abusers when their victims first seek protection from a court through an interim or temporary protective order, which is an incredibly dangerous time for victims.
- The bill would also ensure courts give clear and specific guidance to respondents of protective orders about firearm surrender requirements.
- Access to a gun in a domestic violence situation makes it five times more likely that a woman involved in that situation will be killed.
- Intimate partner homicide also disproportionately affects Black women in Maryland, as they are killed at a rate nearly four times greater than their proportion within Maryland's population.
- Studies show that laws requiring domestic abusers to relinquish firearms save lives. This bill will help protect victims during a critical, vulnerable period.
- Every month, an average of 76 women in the US are shot and killed by an intimate partner—and nearly 6 million women reported having a gun used against them by an intimate partner. We need to do everything that we can to keep our loved ones safe – and ensure that our laws are equipped to successfully disrupt abusers' access to guns, and save lives.