



Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

February 11, 2026

Senate Bill 362 – *Criminal Law – Child’s Access to Firearms – Penalty (Ny’Kala Strawder Act)*

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

The Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MDAAP) is a statewide association representing more than 1,100 pediatricians and allied pediatric and adolescent healthcare practitioners in the State and is a strong and established advocate promoting the health and safety of all the children we serve. On behalf of MDAAP, we submit this letter of **support** for Senate Bill 362.

Senate Bill 362 strengthens penalties for the unsafe storage of firearms when a minor can access them. Under current law, it is illegal to store or leave a loaded firearm in a place where an unsupervised minor could potentially gain access. This bill increases the penalty for violations from a maximum \$1,000 fine to up to five years of imprisonment, a \$1,000 fine, or both. Exceptions remain for cases where a minor’s access is supervised by an adult, the firearm was obtained through unlawful entry, or the firearm is in the possession of law enforcement during official duties.

MDAAP views firearm safety as a critical public health issue under its Pediatric Injury Prevention Strategy. A 2024 Johns Hopkins report found that, for the third consecutive year, firearms were the leading cause of death among children, surpassing disease and car accidents. Unsafe gun storage dramatically increases the risks of accidental shootings, youth suicides, and gun violence. By increasing penalties for improper firearm storage, this bill holds adults accountable, encourages responsible gun ownership, and helps protect children from preventable harm. The integration of this policy would greatly benefit both public health and the safety of Maryland’s children. For these reasons, MDAAP urges a favorable vote.

**For more information call:**

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