

SB0362_RichardKaplowitz_FAV
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Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703-7134

TESTIMONY ON SB#0362 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Criminal Law - Child's Access to Firearms - Penalty (Ny'Kala Strawder Act)

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#/0362, **Criminal Law - Child's Access to Firearms - Penalty (Ny'Kala Strawder Act)**

As summarized by AI: ¹

Unsecured firearms have led to multiple, preventable child fatalities and injuries in Maryland in recent years, prompting state officials to introduce stricter, targeted criminal penalties.

Recent Incidents and Fatalities in Maryland

- **January 2025 (Baltimore):** 10-year-old E'vaa Sewell died after accessing an unsecured gun at her grandmother's home.
- **August 2022 (Baltimore City):** 15-year-old NyKayla Strawder was shot and killed by a 9-year-old boy who found a gun in a closet. The incident led to the "NyKayla Strawder Act" to strengthen penalties for improper storage.
- **November 2024 (Largo):** A toddler was hospitalized in critical condition after shooting herself with an unsecured handgun.
- **June 2024 (Montgomery County):** A 3-year-old girl was injured by a gun accessed by a juvenile, described as a "ghost gun".
- **February 2026 (Annapolis):** A second-grader was injured after bringing a gun to school, highlighting the danger of children accessing unsecured home firearms.

Key Data and Context

- **Leading Cause of Death:** Firearms are the leading cause of death for children and teens in Maryland, with 64 children and teens dying by guns annually.

This bill will criminalize persons who fail to secure firearms to protect children. The bill will alter the penalty to add imprisonment not exceeding 5 years for storing or leaving a loaded firearm in a location where the person knew or should have known that an unsupervised minor has access to the firearm.

Sixty-four innocent lives might have been saved if this bill was law – Maryland must take every possible action to keep guns from killing our children!

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB0362.

¹ Google Search "child deaths from unsecured guns in Maryland"