



Committee: House Judiciary Committee

Bill Number: House Bill 1608 - Public Safety - Firearms - Storage Requirements

Hearing Date: March 13, 2026

Position: Support

The Maryland Association of School Health Nurses (MASHN) and the Maryland Assembly for School-Based Health Care (MASBHC) **strongly support** *House Bill 1608 – Public Safety – Firearms – Storage Requirements*. The bill strengthens Maryland’s existing law, called Jaelyn’s Law, on safe storage requirements to prevent children from accessing firearms and ammunitions.

House Bill 1608 is essential to Maryland’s efforts to protect Maryland’s youth from firearm violence including youth suicide, school shootings, and violence at home and their communities. The data demonstrates a compelling and urgent need to strengthen Maryland’s law:

- **Youth Suicide: The Crisis in Maryland:** Youth suicide is a public health crisis in Maryland. Based on a 2018 survey conducted in Maryland, 22.9% of middle schoolers reported seriously thinking about killing themselves and 18% of high schoolers reported they had seriously considered attempting suicide.ⁱ Access to firearms increases the risk of a fatal suicide attempt, as 85% of suicide attempts with a gun are fatal compared to every other method which has a 5% fatality rate.ⁱⁱ
- **How Safe Storage of Firearms Reduces Suicide Risk for Youth:** Access to firearms is a significant risk factor for suicide of both older (over 15 years old) and younger adolescents.ⁱⁱⁱ Nationally, between 2015 and 2016, a firearm has been involved in 40% of the over 2,000 annual youth suicides.^{iv} Extensive evidence shows that access to firearms increases the likelihood of death by suicide among children and adolescents:
 - When a home contains unlocked guns the odds of a child or adolescent dying by firearm suicide is more than **twice** as high as in households where guns are locked^v
 - The risk of suicide by gun is more than **twice** as high in households with loaded guns, as compared to households with unloaded guns^{vi} 82% of youth under the

age of 18 who attempted suicide used a firearm belonging to a family member, usually a parent.^{vii}

- About two-thirds of the firearms are stored unlocked.^{viii}
- 75% of children report knowing exactly where firearms are stored in their homes – ultimately risking tragic outcomes.^{ix}

Maryland urgently needs to strengthen our firearm storage laws to protect our youth. We ask for a favorable report on this legislation. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net or (443) 926-3443.

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<https://health.maryland.gov/bha/suicideprevention/Documents/2020%20Maryland%20State%20Suicide%20Prevention%20Plan.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/risk/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/risk/#:~:text=Twelve%20or%20more%20U.S.%20case,live%20in%20homes%20with%20guns.&text=Firearm%20access%20was%20a%20risk,for%20both%20males%20and%20females.>

^{iv} <https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/articles/2019-01-17/youth-suicide-rates-higher-in-states-with-more-gun-ownership>

^v <https://www.srcd.org/research/access-firearms-increases-child-and-adolescent-suicide>

^{vi} <https://www.srcd.org/research/access-firearms-increases-child-and-adolescent-suicide>

^{vii} <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/youth-access/#:~:text=Source%20of%20Firearms%20in%20Youth%20Suicides&text=An%20NVISS%20study%20of%20firearm,family%20member%20usually%20a%20parent.>

^{viii} <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/youth-access/>

^{ix} <https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/research/areas-of-research/center-for-injury-research-and-policy/injury-topics/general/gun-safety>