



## **Everytown for Gun Safety Testimony in Support of HB1608**

March 11, 2026

Chair Bartlett and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Everytown for Gun Safety I write in support of HB1608, and request a favorable report. HB1608 strengthens Maryland's firearm storage law to reflect best gun safety practices. First, the bill prohibits firearm owners from storing their guns in a place where they know or should know that a minor is likely to gain access to it. Additionally, the bill requires firearm owners (or authorized users) to store their firearms in a locked container, like a safe or lock box, when it is not being used or under the direct control of the individual. The bill imposes civil penalties for violations, with three or more violations resulting in a prohibition on the individual's ability to purchase or possess firearms.

Every year, hundreds of children in the US gain access to loaded firearms and unintentionally shoot themselves or someone else. More than half of firearm owners in the United States do not lock all of their guns securely, and an assessment by the Secret Service found that 76% of school shooters acquired the firearm they used from the home of a parent or close relative.<sup>1</sup> Over the last few years, several children in Maryland have been killed or injured after accessing unsecured, loaded firearms, the most recent being in mid-February 2026, where a six year old died after accidentally firing a gun he found in his home.<sup>2</sup> 4.6 million children in the United States live in a home with at least one unlocked and loaded firearm, and research shows secure storage practices play a vital role in reducing the risk of gun violence, including from unintentional shootings by children.<sup>3</sup>

Storing firearms securely protects children and adults by preventing unintentional shootings, gun suicides, and gun theft. Everytown's research shows that secure storage laws have great promise for decreasing gun suicide among young people: From 1999 to 2022, the youth suicide rate for young people ages 10–24 increased by 36 percent in states with no or only reckless

---

<sup>1</sup> Murrow, S. "More than half of U.S. gun owners do not safely store their guns, survey finds". John Hopkins University. (2018). <https://bit.ly/3ivTVba>; National Threat Assessment Center, "Protecting America's Schools: A US Secret Service Analysis of Targeted School Violence," US Secret Service, Department of Homeland Security, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2U7vnwa>.

<sup>2</sup>"Man charged with leaving loaded gun out after child accidentally shoots herself in Cheverly," June 4, 2024, <https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/crime/man-charged-with-leaving-gun-out-after-child-accidentally-shoots-herself-in-maryland/65-f479ae77-31fe-49a2-b6ee-00d5ad36f55d>; 6-year-old boy dies after accidentally firing gun in Montgomery County home," February 17, 2026 <https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/child-killed-accidental-shooting-montgomery-county/4062429/>.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Miller and Deborah Azrael, "Firearm Storage in US Households with Children: Findings from the 2021 National Firearm Survey," JAMA Network Open 5, no. 2 (2022): e2148823.

access storage laws, but in states with the most protective laws, the youth gun suicide rate decreased by 1 percent during this period. One study found that households that locked both firearms and ammunition were associated with a 78 percent lower risk of self-inflicted firearm injuries and an 85 percent lower risk of unintentional firearm injuries among children and teens, compared to those that locked neither.<sup>4</sup> Hundreds of thousands of guns are also stolen each year, fueling the illegal market and often ending up in the hands of people who are prohibited from having them – showing the importance of securely storing guns even in houses where children aren’t present.<sup>5</sup>

Strengthening the requirement for secure storage of firearms will save lives and prevent firearm injury in Maryland and will help reinforce a culture of responsible gun ownership across the state.

Mary Kenah  
Everytown for Gun Safety

---

<sup>4</sup> David C. Grossman et al., “Gun Storage Practices and Risk of Youth Suicide and Unintentional Firearm Injuries,” JAMA 293, no. 6 (2005): 707–14, <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.293.6.707>.

<sup>5</sup> ATF, “National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFTCA), Volume II: Crime Gun Intelligence and Analysis—Part V: Firearm Thefts,” January 2023, <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/nfcta-volume-ii-part-v-firearm-thefts/download>.