

Testimony in Favor of HB83
January 29, 2026

Good afternoon, my name is Nicole. I am a professor in the university System of Maryland, a researcher, a Wicomico County resident, a gun violence survivor, and a parent.

My ex-husband, during one of his black-out drunk moments, held a gun to one of my son's heads. My son was only nine years old at the time. After we separated, he started breaking into my house while armed. Ultimately, I received 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.

This personal experience of trying to disarm my ex-husband during a time when he proved to be an imminent threat to myself, my children, and to himself made me realize how vital it is to remove the guns from DV situations before they can potentially become deadly.

Guns amplify the coercive power and control dynamics inherent in abusive intimate relationships and firearms are far too often used to coerce, terrorize, and emotionally manipulate victims.

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.

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. Abusers with firearms are five times more likely to kill their female victims.

When someone becomes legally prohibited from possessing firearms due to an order of protection, criminal conviction, or as part of the terms of a pretrial order, it is critical that all firearms in their possession are turned in or removed to protect the safety of those around them. Further, enforcement by police and the courts is crucial and lifesaving, as there is a risk that guns will be used to threaten, harm, or kill the intimate partner or other family member after an order is issued.

Maryland has made great strides in recent years to reduce gun violence, but there remains more we can do to keep survivors of domestic abuse safe. Lives remain at stake, and the time to address this risk to public health is now.