



OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR BALTIMORE CITY

March 11, 2026

The Honorable Sandy Bartlett  
Chair, Judiciary Committee  
House Office Building  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: Support of HB 1123 – Criminal Law - Minor's Access to Firearms - Penalty**

Dear Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my support for HB1123 on behalf of the Office of the State's Attorney for Baltimore City. This bill addresses a critical gap in our statutes that hold accountable those who fail to store their loaded firearms in a safe location, and out of reach of children.

A five-year criminal penalty, as proposed in HB1123, would represent an important advancement in strengthening accountability within Maryland's criminal justice system. At present, a violation of CR §4-104 regarding a child's access to a firearm carries a maximum penalty of only a \$1,000 fine. This limited consequence does not adequately reflect the seriousness of the conduct or provide meaningful accountability for actions that endanger children.

Under current law, allowing a minor to access a firearm under CR §4-104 is treated solely as a fineable offense. Considering the tragic circumstances that resulted in the death of Nykayla Strawder, this penalty is plainly inadequate. The conduct that led to Ms. April Gaskins' actions resulted in the devastating loss of a young life and immeasurable grief for the Strawder family. While nothing can undo this tragedy or bring Nykayla back, the General Assembly can honor her memory by strengthening the law to help prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future.

At a time when firearms are increasingly present in our communities and schools continue to face threats of violence, it is critical that Maryland's laws provide a meaningful deterrent to unsafe firearm storage. Enacting HB1123 would demonstrate a clear commitment to protecting children by establishing stronger consequences for leaving loaded firearms accessible to minors.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge your support for HB1123 and ask that you work to ensure its passage. Strengthening this law would reaffirm Maryland's commitment to



OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR BALTIMORE CITY

safeguarding children and holding individuals accountable when preventable tragedies like this occur.

Sincerely,

*Ivan J. Bates*

Ivan J. Bates  
State's Attorney for Baltimore City