

**Testimony on Behalf of County Executive Marc Elrich on
Bill 36-23 Sale of Firearms or Ammunition – Suicide Awareness and Firearm Education (SAFE)
Act**

October 10, 2023

My name is Earl Stoddard, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer in the Office of the County Executive. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Bill 36-23 known as the Suicide Awareness and Firearm Education or SAFE Act on behalf of County Executive Marc Elrich. The County Executive supports this legislation and only has some concerns about the enforcement of the proposed requirements.

According to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), there were 26,328 firearm suicides in the United States in 2021, which accounted for more than 50% of the total suicides in that year. Requiring that gun sellers provide information to gun buyers about the risks of firearm-related suicide, ensuring safe use and storage of firearms, and teaching conflict resolution represents a common-sense approach to reduce the risks of firearm suicides in Montgomery County.

The only concern of the County Executive is enforcement. As drafted, enforcement of this requirement would fall on the Department of Health & Human Services, Public Health Service, Licensure and Regulatory Services division. This program is already responsible for conducting numerous other inspections, including those of restaurants. As part of the County Executive's proposed FY24 submission earlier this year, there was a request for an additional inspector to address the increasing responsibilities of this unit. That request was not approved. Adding additional responsibilities to this unit will impact its capacity to meet existing workload. As the County Executive supports the goals of this legislation, additional resources will be required. The Executive Branch is considering potential alternative enforcement vehicles or units and will provide additional feedback to the Council moving forward.