

TESTIMONY OF JULIO BARRETO JR, COUNTY RESIDENT, IN OPPOSITION TO BILL 36-23

I am Julio Barreto Jr. a Montgomery County resident for close to 40 years. I am currently an entrepreneur involved in real estate and other ventures and recently became a firearms instructor. In my previous life I spent over 25 years representing local governments in Congress covering a range of issues including violence prevention (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/juliobarretojr/>).

My educational training has been in social work and the lessons learned from the exposure has helped tremendously in my career. I do strongly support efforts to prevent and reduce suicides. Fortunately, no one in my circle has ever attempted or successfully committed suicide. I have had friends who battled depression, but have been able to get the help they need.

I am opposed to this bill for two reasons. First, the objective of this legislation is not clear. Is it designed to decrease acts of suicide or is it designed to blame the gun community for this unfortunate act? If the objective is to ultimately prevent suicides, why are other businesses not required to display this information as well? Suicide is a mental health issue, not a gun issue. Psychology Today and the World Health Organization state clearly that strict gun laws do nothing to prevent suicide

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-new-brain/201607/fact-check-gun-control-and-suicide>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2649482/>

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide>

Two interesting facts emerge from the literature: first, gun control laws do nothing to reduce or prevent suicides. Pesticides and hanging are just as prevalent as firearms as the tool used to commit suicide. Why isn't Home Depot required to hand out this information since they sell pesticides? Why not Walgreens or CVS since they sell prescription drugs which are also used to commit suicide?

Second, individuals who decide to commit suicide will find a way to do so. I am a native New Yorker, buildings like the Empire State Building create iron barriers to prevent people from jumping off the building. Why aren't building owners above a certain height not required to display and distribute this information? If suicide prevention is the objective, why limit the scope of this initiative to firearm establishments?

My second reason for opposing this bill is due to the continued demonization of firearm owners and businesses. Referencing the Anne Arundel County requirement is a good reference for how firearms are demonized when this issue is raised. Putting aside the constitutional issues pertaining to the county mandate, the literature clearly suggests that simply owning a firearm leads to suicidal tendencies. This is ridiculous. I own firearms and have never once thought of using them to commit suicide.

Do people use firearms to commit suicide? Yes! Is handing out information at gun stores going to prevent that from happening again? Doubtful. It seems as if the county is using something as sensitive and gut wrenching as suicide to target gun owners and the businesses they establish as opposed to developing strategies and providing adequate resources to prevent suicide.

Whether you own a firearm or not, everyone agrees suicide is not to be taken lightly. It is unfortunate and horrific for the families who sometimes are left guilt ridden for not being aware

of the depth of emotional distress their loved one experience or feel guilt about not being able to do more to help. If you are serious at reducing the number of suicide attempts, the focus should be on adequate MENTAL HEALTH resources so help can be provided and address the root cause for the individual's mental state.

Thank you.