

**Testimony of Regina Schneider on behalf of Atlantic Guns, Inc.
in Opposition to Bill 36-23.**

Good afternoon. Thank you for including me in today's hearing.

My name is Regina Schneider. I have been a Mental Health First Aid Instructor and NAMI Affiliate board member. I have completed ASIST, CALM and QPR suicide prevention trainings and have been recognized for my extensive mental health awareness work with faith communities. My husband Steve is the owner of Atlantic Guns, a Montgomery County Designated Legacy Business serving our community since 1960. Atlantic Guns has voluntarily provided our customers suicide awareness brochures and information for many years.

In 2016 we were honored to be guest speakers at a conference coordinated by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and the San Francisco Veterans Administration. We talked about our suicide information and prevention effort which included brochures, posters and awareness information that was sent to retailers and ranges throughout Maryland. The Maryland Licensed Firearms Dealers Association, Grassroots Crisis and national experts supported our efforts. Anne Arundel County has contacted me several times because of our involvement in these efforts. Atlantic Guns currently offers our customers excellent brochures developed in a joint effort between the National Shooting Sports Foundation and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. They are right inside our front door. This the same informational brochure Anne Arundel County is mandating. We also provide qualified firearm safety training which include safe handling and storage information.

I strongly oppose Bill 36-23. It mandates that we must provide the information that we already make available to our customers. It

authorizes the county to charge us with a potential criminal violation which includes hefty fines and jail time if an employee forgets to hand a customer a brochure. Atlantic Guns and others in our industry are clearly trying to be part of the solution to the serious and complex problem of suicide. We should not be subject to this tremendous burden and potential risk to our survival as a responsible, law abiding, business with deep concerns for personal and community safety. There is also an unintended consequence of this bill. I am aware that some customers at Anne Arundel County gun stores have been very upset because they feel they are personally being presumed to have a mental health problem or be at risk of suicide when given the brochure. This creates a stigma which must be avoided.

Catherine Barber is a senior researcher at the Harvard School of Public Health's Injury Research Center. She is the founding director of Means Matter, a project aimed at reducing a suicidal person's access to highly lethal suicide methods and lead author of CALM (Counseling on Access to Lethal Means). She was an originator of the Gun Shop Project, a successful collaborative effort. I spoke with Cathy this morning. She is opposed to this Bill for the same reasons I have stated. She said: "mandates do not engender good will and presume opposition; they create enemies; go against good public health practice are impolite and create resistance on an issue where there is already some shared mutual concern."

We welcome you to visit Atlantic Guns on Frederick Road to see the materials we make available to customers, and we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to further discuss our mutual interest in suicide prevention.

Thank you!