

In Support of Expedited Bill 21-22, Weapons -Firearms In or Near Places of Public Assembly
On behalf of the Association of Independent Schools of Greater Washington

July 20, 2022

I am submitting this testimony as Executive Director of the Association of Independent Schools of Greater Washington (“AISGW”) in support of *Expedited Bill 21-22, Weapons-Firearms In or Near Places of Public Assembly*. AISGW represents 78 member schools in the greater D.C. area, and our schools educate over 10,000 students in Montgomery County alone. *Expedited Bill 21-22* would prevent an individual from possessing a firearm within 100 yards of a “place of public assembly” even when the individual has a wear-and-carry permit from the State of Maryland. The definition of public assembly includes schools. This restriction strengthens current County law, which currently exempts individuals with permits from the restriction against carrying weapons within 100 yards of places of public assembly.

We commend the Montgomery County Council for these efforts to stem acts of gun violence that have become shockingly all too common in our communities and on our school grounds. The recent mass shooting at the Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, along with the persistent and terrifying recurrence of mass shootings across our country, have left school leaders once again consoling and calming their communities while searching for solutions to keep their school communities safe. Indeed, one of our very own AISGW schools was subject to a harrowing act of gun violence in April of this year.

We understand that Maryland State law already prohibits the wear, carry and transport of handguns and firearms on public school grounds. *CR 4-102*. Extending that protection to *all* schools, as well as other community gathering places throughout the County, however, is an important and – unfortunately – very necessary next step as we see this wave of gun violence continue. Moreover, we urge the County to consider any other steps that would keep our children safe, whether those include broader prevention and education efforts, or prohibitions such as this proposed legislation, aimed at preventing this violence from reoccurring.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed legislation on behalf of our AISGW member schools and would welcome any chance to support further the goals of keeping our children and our school campuses protected from this persistent threat.