

**Testimony for the Montgomery County Council  
July 26, 2022**

**Expedited Bill 21-22, Weapons – Firearms In or Near Places of Public Assembly  
FAVORABLE**

To Council President Albornoz and members of the Public Safety Committee,

My name is Joanna Pearl. I am a volunteer with Maryland Moms Demand Action, and I live in Kensington. I submit this written testimony in support of Expedited Bill 21-22, Weapons – Firearms In or Near Places of Public Assembly.

I recently moved to this area, and my family chose to live in Maryland because we hope and believe it will be a safe place to raise my four-year-old daughter. Every day, I worry that even here in our state, we and our children are not safe from gun violence as we do everyday things like go to a park, a synagogue, a library, or a community center.

Montgomery County is experiencing a rise in gun violence, and the last thing we need is guns where people gather. Maryland law grants counties and other local authorities the power to regulate firearms in and near certain sensitive places, like those listed in the ordinance. The county should do all it can to keep guns out of these sensitive locations where our children and families gather, and where we and our elected representatives take part in the democratic process.

A growing body of research shows that when it is easier for people to carry guns in public, violent crime goes up. Sensitive area prohibitions, however, keep people safe where the risk of gun violence is elevated. It is a myth that mass shooters target gun-free zones: a study of 30-year of shootings showed no evidence that a single mass shooter chose to target a place because it prohibited guns. Rather, studies have shown that most mass shooters were connected to the location or were motivated by hate, a perceived grievance, or an interpersonal conflict. Keeping guns out of sensitive areas, as this bill would do, will make us all safer.

I hope the Committee will pass Expedited Bill 21-22 and protect everyone in our community from gun violence. Thank you for your attention to this critically important issue.

Sincerely,  
Joanna Pearl  
Montgomery County Local Group Co-Lead  
Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, Maryland Chapter