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*Written Testimony of Katie Novotny in Support of HB963*

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February 16, 2021

I am a member of Multiple Gun Rights organizations. Maryland Shall Issue, Associated Gun Clubs, Maryland State Rifle and Pistol Association, and the National Rifle Association. I am a certified Range Safety Officer with the NRA. I compete in multiple shooting events such as Steel Challenge, 3-gun, small bore, and vintage military rifle matches. I am an avid firearms collector. I support HB963.

This bill allows for an exemption under the sales and use tax for the first \$500 of the purchase price for certain firearm safety devices. This is a common sense bill to encourage the purchase of these items, as well as making them more affordable.

Maryland requires every handgun to have an integrated mechanical safety device installed before it leaves the FFL. One of the common ones used is the Omega Gunlock. From their website, this item costs \$29.99. <http://www.omegagunlock.com/order-now/semi-auto-pistol-locks> This is a cost to the consumer above and beyond the cost of the HQL (training, fingerprints, fee to MSP for background check), the \$10 MSP background check fee, and the cost of the firearm. While the tax on this item is not significant at about \$1.80, it is an added cost. For these locks, a different one must be purchased for different calibers. Considering this is a state mandated requirement, it makes sense to allow an exemption for the sales tax on safety items like these, as exceptions are made for other products that serve the greater good.

Now let's talk about safes. Existing Maryland law requires loaded firearms to be inaccessible to children 16 and under. So for unloaded firearms, a cable lock was acceptable. As a matter of fact you could get these for free from Project ChildSafe, ran by the National Shooting Sports Foundation. <https://projectchildsafe.org/> These met the requirement for keeping a loaded firearm away from children, but they do nothing to prevent theft. They also do not meet the standards spelled out in SB479/HB200 (Jaelynn's Law), a proposed firearms storage law before the legislature this session. To meet the standards of this law, and to prevent theft, you will need a safe. Tractor Supply Company sells firearms safes. They are not top of the line, but they are generally accessible to most people in this state so we will look at prices for their safes. For long gun safes, it is well known that safes never actually fit the advertised number of firearms. It is generally safe to multiply the advertised number by .7 to know how many firearms a safe will actually hold. This very basic Winchester branded safe advertised to hold 12 firearms is currently on sale for \$349.99, normally \$399.99. <https://www.tractorsupply.com/tsc/product/winchester-gun-safe-12-gun-ts12-30> Tax on this item would be either \$21 or \$24 if no longer on sale. This is a no frills safe with a minimum fire rating and 14 ga steel walls. It is offering basic security for a fairly low price for a very small number of firearms. Even for a safe at this price point, this bill would save a consumer real money, at the least offsetting the cost to have this 212 lb item delivered.

Stepping up to a slightly nicer safe that is made here in the USA, Tractor Supply offers some TSC exclusive entry level safes from Liberty Safe. These safes are more secure than their lower end counterparts. This 30 gun safe <https://www.tractorsupply.com/tsc/product/liberty-safe-liberty-revere-30-gun-dial-lock-safe-with-40-minute-fire-rating-rv30-gym-dp> costs \$699.99 and offers some updated security features from the lower end safes, as well as enhanced fire protection. The 375 lb weight also prevents theft of the entire safe. The tax on this item would be \$42. However, this bill only allows for tax exemption for the first \$500 of the purchase price, bringing the tax burden on this item down to \$12. The tax exemption on the first \$500 allows for a maximum tax savings of \$30.

If looking for storage for a single handgun, a person might opt for a small handgun safe such as this one made by Sports Afield. <https://www.tractorsupply.com/tsc/product/sports-afield-home-defense-top-open-quick-access-vault-with-electronic-lock-sa-hd1x#> This safe holds one handgun and costs \$80.99 right now, on sale from \$89.99. Tax would be \$4.86 or \$5.40 for the full priced item. This may not seem like a significant outlay of money, but for many of the record number of new gun owners, that may make a difference in allowing them to purchase a security device sooner rather than later.

Another reality is that much of the state is very close to Delaware, where someone may drive to purchase a big ticket item without having to pay sales tax, losing that sale for businesses in this state. Not all people have that ability, however. The people who would most benefit from this bill are less likely to be able to travel in order to save that tax money.

In the interest of safety, it makes sense to pass this bill and reduce the burden on Marylanders who wish to store their firearms responsibly.

Because of these reasons above, I request a favorable report.

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