

MARYLAND JUDICIAL CONFERENCE
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Hon. Matthew J. Fader
Chief Justice

187 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, MD 21401

MEMORANDUM

TO: House Judiciary Committee
FROM: Legislative Committee
Suzanne D. Pelz, Esq.
410-260-1523
RE: House Bill 952
Crimes – Firearms – Penalties and Procedures (Violent Firearms
Offender Act of 2023)
DATE: March 1, 2023
(3/8)
POSITION: Oppose

The Maryland Judiciary opposes House Bill 952. This bill establishes and alters various penalties and conditions of sentencing regarding certain firearm-related violations.

This bill contains numerous mandatory sentencing provisions – including mandatory minimum sentences, mandatory consecutive sentences, prohibitions on suspension of sentences, and limitations on parole eligibility. The Judiciary traditionally opposes legislation that includes mandatory provisions. The Judiciary believes it is important for judges to weigh the facts and circumstances for each individual case when imposing a sentence. Provisions that place restrictions on the sentencing judge prevent the judge from considering legislative intent or factors unique to the case. Recognizing that lawmakers are responsible for enacting penalties for crimes, judges are mindful of various mitigating factors in crafting a sentence that most appropriately fits the individual defendant and the crime.

cc. Hon. Nino Mangione
Judicial Council
Legislative Committee
Kelley O'Connor