



Testimony in Support of the
Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act
SB 784/HB 935
Executive Director Karen Herren
Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence

February 14, 2024

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe, and distinguished members of the committee, Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence (MPGV) is a statewide organization dedicated to reducing gun deaths and injuries in Maryland. We urge the committee for an **Favorable** report on **Senate Bill 784**.

Senate Bill 784 proposes to establish an 11% excise tax on firearms, ammunition, and certain related products to fund programs in order to offset the devastating effects that the firearm industry has on society. This bill is a critical step towards holding the firearms industry accountable for the impact of their products on our communities while providing much-needed resources to address this urgent public health crisis.

HISTORICAL PRECEDENT

For over a century, the firearms industry has been subject to a federal level excise tax on firearms, ammunition, and parts and accessories under the Pittman-Robertson Act¹. For most of this time, the proceeds from this tax have gone to offset the harm the industry inflicts on wildlife conservation efforts². Meanwhile, the firearms industry continues to enjoy record growth and profits while largely evading financial responsibility for the havoc wrought by its products on human lives and communities. This is all despite the fact that recent trends in the industry indicate that a dwindling percentage of firearm related sales are toward hunting efforts.³ It is time for the firearms industry to bear more of the costs of the societal harm their products enable.

GROWTH OF THE INDUSTRY

In economic data presented by the National Shooting Sports Foundation the industry has enjoyed exponential growth and profit in recent years. By their own calculations, the firearm industry's economic impact has risen 322% since 2008⁴. This impact is not

¹ 16 U.S.C.A. §669 et seq

² [Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act explained](#)

³ A 2021 [study](#) by Southwick Associates estimated that about one-quarter (25.8 percent) of all firearms and ammunition sold in 2020 were purchased for hunting.

⁴ [economic imp act - report | 2023](#);

<https://www3.nssf.org/share/PDF/EconomicImpact/2022data/maryland.pdf>

factoring in the actual cost to society of the gun violence that their products facilitate. During this time of the industry's exponential growth, we have witnessed an unprecedented spike in shootings and gun homicides across the nation and in Maryland.

COST OF GUN VIOLENCE

Taxing the firearms industry is not only a reasonable measure but a necessary one to generate sustained revenue for programs that mitigate the devastating societal effects of gun violence. According to CDC data from 2011 to 2021, the nationwide firearm homicide rate increased 85 percent. In an average year in America, gun violence kills 40,000 people, wounds another 76,000, and costs a staggering \$557 billion⁵. In Maryland, we are seeing almost 800 people die by guns annually with another 1,400 wounded. The estimated economic cost in the state of this epidemic is around \$10.5 billion with at least \$383.9 million being paid by taxpayers⁶.

For some context, the \$557 billion national number is five times the nation's budget for the Department of Education, which funds preschool through college for millions of Americans. Imagine the good we could do allocating those resources toward beneficial and productive investments such as educating the next generation instead of the need to pay for the tragic consequences of gun violence⁷.

Firearms and ammunition sold by licensed manufacturers, dealers, and vendors of these products contribute to gun violence and broader harms. Whether through corrupt or negligent licensed dealers, straw purchasers, or theft and loss from sellers, gun dealers are the leading source of firearms trafficked to illegal markets. For years, the industry has rejected modernizing systems that could assist in stemming this flow, resisted mandates that would require stronger gun store security to prevent theft, and/or innovations in the products themselves that would make them safer and less accessible to non-authorized users.

Taxing the firearms industry would place a reasonable cost on its members profiting from the sale of their products in order to generate sustained revenue for programs that are designed to remediate the devastating effects these products cause families and communities across this state. As survivors, families, communities, employers, and taxpayers, we all pay for the enormous costs associated with this violence, whether we own a gun or not.

MARYLAND EXAMPLES

On July 2, 2023 a mass shooting in the Brooklyn Homes neighborhood of Baltimore led to 2 deaths and 28 wounded. In addition to the devastating human loss and suffering, the economic costs of this one event are staggering. This one horrific incident of gun violence left an estimated \$59.3 million price tag, of which \$2.5 million is borne by taxpayers.⁸

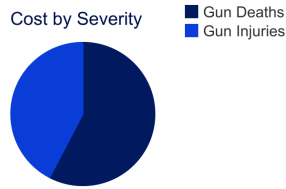
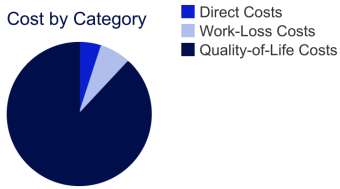
⁵ <https://everystat.org/>

⁶ <https://everystat.org/#Maryland>

⁷ https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-economic-cost-of-gun-violence/?_gl=1*sfct83*_ga*NDM2MDkzNDc1LjE3MDcyNDI0MjQ.*_ga_LT0FWV3EK3*MTcwNzI0MjQyNS4xLjEuMTcwNzI0MjQ0NS4wLjAuMA..

⁸ <https://everytownresearch.org/report/economic-cost-calculator/>

Cost to society for 2 gun deaths and 28 nonfatal gun injuries (Mass Shooting) in Maryland.

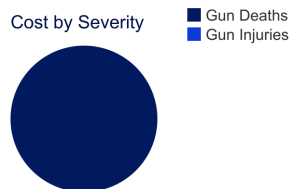
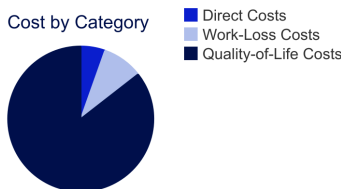


Emergency Transport	\$8,608
Medical Care	\$834,005
Mental Health Care	\$33,137
Police	\$1,552,423
Criminal Justice	\$448,354
Employer	\$68,495
Work-Loss Costs	\$4,111,228
Quality-of-Life Costs	\$52,247,958

Total cost to Maryland: \$59,304,206

Even a single homicide is estimated to cost the state \$17.5 million in costs to survivors and families directly affected, employers, government, and the broader community. Taxpayers shoulder \$925,959 of this through the government portion of medical and mental health care, first responders, ambulances, police response and investigations, and criminal justice services.⁹

Cost to society for 1 gun deaths and 0 nonfatal gun injuries (Assault or Homicide) in Maryland.



Emergency Transport	\$890
Medical Care	\$8,985
Mental Health Care	\$13,028
Police	\$202,657
Criminal Justice	\$710,487
Employer	\$12,218
Work-Loss Costs	\$1,581,047
Quality-of-Life Costs	\$14,982,967

Total cost to Maryland: \$17,512,280

<https://everytownresearch.org/report/economic-cost-calculator/#economic-cost-calculator>

⁹ <https://everytownresearch.org/report/economic-cost-calculator/#economic-cost-calculator>

Quantifying what we spend in the aftermath of a shooting—whether the shooting was unintentional, an assault, a shooting by police, or an act of suicide—helps us understand the price we pay for this violence.

KEY INITIATIVES

By passing Senate Bill 784, Maryland can take a decisive stand against gun violence and invest in programs that prioritize public safety, improve community well-being, and address the damage of gun violence. The bill specifically allocates money to the following initiatives:

- **The Maryland Trauma Physician Services Fund** - Allocates funding to medical systems to address trauma-related healthcare costs, with a significant portion attributed to gun violence. The medical care associated with gun violence is notably expensive, averaging approximately \$30,000 for survivors in the year following the injury¹⁰.
- **The R. Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center at the University of Maryland Medical System** - The R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center is a world renowned medical facility specializing in providing emergency trauma care and critical medical treatment to patients who have experienced severe injuries or medical emergencies. It is recognized for its expertise in trauma care and its commitment to saving lives in critical situations¹¹.
- **The Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund** - Administered by the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention, MD VIPP finances organizations providing violence intervention and prevention services in heavily impacted communities¹².
- **The Survivors of Homicide Victims Grant Program** - Managed by the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention, this program offers victim assistance, advocacy, and support, ensuring survivors exercise their legal rights¹³.
- **The Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention within the Maryland Department of Health** - Taking a public health approach, this office will coordinate efforts to address, prevent, and intervene in gun violence. It will be housed within the Maryland Department of Health.

We urge a FAVORABLE report on SB784.

¹⁰ <https://hms.harvard.edu/news/business-case-reducing-gun-violence>

¹¹ <https://www.umms.org/ummc/health-services/shock-trauma/about>

¹² <https://goccp.maryland.gov/grants/programs/vipp/>

¹³ <https://goccp.maryland.gov/grants/programs/sohg/>