



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support of - SB 488- Civil Actions - Public Nuisances - Firearm Industry Members (Gun Industry Accountability Act of 2024)

TO: Senator William Smith, Chair Judicial Proceedings
FROM: Ken Shilling, Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland
Gun Violence Prevention Lead Advocate
DATE: February 16, 2024

As a Unitarian Universalist, I know that conscience will not be quieted by anything less than truth and justice. The gun industry should be held accountable for dangerous products and irresponsible business practices. In pursuit of justice, I ask you to support **SB 488 - Gun Industry Accountability Act**.

Gun manufacturers have failed to include safety features that could prevent unauthorized access to firearms. The industry is irresponsible for not applying childproofing technologies that can prevent unintentional shootings by children.

It is reprehensible that gun marketing is aimed to appeal to children. We have laws that prohibit selling alcohol or tobacco to minors. There is no justification to design and market a child-sized assault weapon—the JR-15—to children.¹ Children do not have the training nor the mature judgment needed to handle an assault weapon.

There are some bad actors in the gun industry who have poor safety or training practices. They do not follow basic security measures. Some commit intentional criminal acts. We believe that they should be held accountable for dangerous and irresponsible business practices that harm people and endanger public safety. Unfortunately, these bad actors aren't being held to the same standards to which we hold any other citizen.

SB 784 prohibits the firearm industry from creating or contributing to a public nuisance through irresponsible and dangerous business practices. It requires the firearm industry to establish and implement certain reasonable controls which prevent guns from falling into the hands of criminals or individuals unfit to possess a firearm.

Responsible business practices are necessary—but not sufficient.

Reasonable controls are necessary—but not sufficient.

We must acknowledge that justice denied is an injustice to those who have been harmed. We need to ensure justice for those harmed by irresponsible and dangerous business practices, or unsafe products.

SB 488 aims to protect public safety and promote accountability within the gun industry. Those harmed should be able to make their case in courts in order to hold the firearm industry accountable to protect public safety.

This is American justice.

We urge a favorable report. Vote for Senate Bill 488.

Ken Shilling

Ken Shilling, Gun Violence Prevention Lead Advocate

¹ <https://www.medpagetoday.com/opinion/second-opinions/106206>

The JR-15 Rifle Places Children's Safety in the Crosshairs

by Apurva Bhatt, MD September 6, 2023