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**BILL NO.:**           **HB 659**

**TITLE:**               Criminal Law – Theft of a Handgun

**SPONSOR:**         Delegate Munoz

**COMMITTEE:**      Judiciary

**POSITION:**        **SUPPORT**

**DATE:**             February 14, 2024

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 659 – Criminal Law – Theft of a Handgun. This legislation would make the theft of a handgun a felony. As a result, those who are found responsible for stealing handguns would then be prohibited from the possession of firearms and would additionally face harsher penalties as a result.

Under current law, the theft of a handgun is a misdemeanor. This punishment is incongruous with the harm done with stolen weapons; an individual can be convicted of stealing a handgun, face misdemeanor charges, and would not be prohibited from legally possessing a firearm. Baltimore County detectives often recover handguns involved in crimes that are stolen. There is a substantial market for stolen handguns, and individuals who cannot legally possess a handgun are willing to pay a significant price, over the retail value, for stolen handguns. This situation continues to fuel gun violence plaguing the State.

HB 659 would complement efforts taken in Baltimore County and statewide to curb gun theft. In 2020, Baltimore County passed the Secure All Firearms Effectively (SAFE) Act bipartisan measure, which would require firearm retail establishments in Baltimore County to install responsible security measures to protect their inventory from potential burglaries. The legislation was introduced following a string of incidents wherein Baltimore County firearm retail establishments were burglarized 10 times in 2018 and 2019. In four of those incidents, burglars succeeded in stealing firearms, including one incident in which 51 weapons were stolen. Weapons stolen from these burglaries are often sold and used to commit additional crimes. Additional punitive measures, as proposed in HB 659 would help address the issue of thieves stealing handguns, getting convicted, and continuing to legally possess a handgun.

Accordingly, Baltimore County urges a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 659. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at [jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov).