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March 25, 2014

Honorable Members of the
Maryland House Ways and Means Committee
House Office Building
Annapolis, Md. 21401

**Subject: SB-0784 Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act
OPPOSE**

Dear Honorable Delegates:

I represent the Western Maryland Sportsmen's Coalition, Inc. The Coalition is comprised of many hunting clubs and sportsmen's associations and the thousands of their individual members living in Garrett, Allegany, Washington, Frederick, and Carroll Counties. As President of the Coalition, I work together with the leadership of these Western Maryland Sportsmen's organizations for the recognition and benefit of the sportsmen and sportswomen of the five most western counties of Maryland.

On March 28th your Committee will be hearing the advantages and disadvantages of SB-0784 (Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act). I, as a private citizen of this state and as the elected representative of the Western Maryland Sportsmen's Coalition, Inc. **strongly urge you to oppose SB-0784.**

Over the past decade, and more and more increasingly, there has been legislation proposed in our State Legislature that, in one form or fashion, is solely designed to discourage sportsmen and women from participating in any firearms related activity, be it hunting, trap and skeet shooting or other shooting competitions. Senate Bill 0784 is another example of this never-ending endeavor. The firearms sportsmen and women of this state are already carrying the burden of a 10% federal excise tax on all handguns, an 11% federal excise tax on rifles, shotguns and ammunition and a state sales tax of 6% on all the above.

Garrett

Allegany

Washington

Frederick

Carroll

The passage of this bill will bring an additional back-breaking 5% state sales and use tax on all firearms, firearm accessories and ammunition. The Fiscal and Policy Note acknowledges that the additional tax burden to our sportsmen and sportswomen will be millions of dollars in additional taxes levied on the sportsmen's gear in the first year alone. In our rural communities of Western Maryland there are many small sports shops that will take a serious financial hit by their customers driving a short distance to either Virginia, West Virginia, or Pennsylvania to purchase scopes, optics and or ammunition simply to avoid additional taxation. These small businesses already bear the burden of competing with internet sales availability of some of these items.

It seems tremendously unfair that that our sports community has been targeted to financially support The Maryland Trauma Physician Services Fund, the R. Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center, the Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund and other initiatives. Perhaps an additional tax on liquor or gasoline or gambling would be a more equitable way to achieve funding for these programs by spreading out the financial burden along a much wider consumer base.

So together with the sportsmen and sportswomen of Washington County Maryland, I strongly urge you to oppose SB-0784. (just another tax)

Respectfully,

Ben Kelkye

Ben Kelkye	President, WMSC, President Frederick County Sportsmen's Council
Jerry Zembower	President, Garrett & Allegany Sportsmen's Association
Joe Winter	President, Washington County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs
Matt Guilfoyle	President, Carroll County Sportsmen's Association