



**2025 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

BILL: SB 577 - Public Safety – Distribution of Literature to Purchasers of Firearms and Ammunition
COMMITTEE: Senate - Judicial Proceedings Committee
POSITION: Letter of Concern
BILL ANALYSIS: SB 577 would require the Maryland Department of Health to develop literature regarding firearms and ammunition for distribution to local health departments, require local health departments to distribute the literature to firearms and ammunition retailers in their county, require retailers to make the literature visible and available and distribute the literature to purchasers, and require local health departments to ensure retailer compliance with the requirements.

POSITION RATIONALE: The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) submits a Letter of Concern for SB 577. The bill would establish a requirement that MDH prepare literature relating to firearms and ammunition including information regarding firearm safety and training, suicide prevention, and conflict resolution and for local health departments (LHDs) to carry out the work at the local level. MACHO supports the intent of the bill but is concerned with the additional requirements placed on LHDs which are not funded. Given additional proposed reductions to LHD funding, LHDs do not have the resources to implement their portions of SB 577.

Under the bill, each LHD would be responsible for distributing the literature to the firearm and ammunition retailers in their jurisdiction. Retailers would be required to display and distribute the literature to anyone purchasing firearms or ammunition. LHDs would also be required to conduct compliance checks to ensure that the materials are displayed and distributed in accordance with the law.

Two (2) counties in the state, Anne Arundel and Montgomery, currently operate similar programs at the local level designed at the community level with community support. In Anne Arundel, teams of two (2) Behavioral Health staff conduct compliance checks of retailers to ensure staff safety. These staff provide education to retail employees, conduct re-inspections, and track data on literature distribution to each retailer. The remaining LHDs do not have sufficient staffing or funding to conduct these activities. If SB 577 is passed, LHDs would likely need to divert resources from other legally mandated programs such as tobacco enforcement which might have the unintended effect of reducing compliance with tobacco-related laws. Other impacts would be felt for other locally identified and already allocated public health priorities.

MACHO believes addressing firearm violence is a public health issue. Unfortunately, LHDs do not have the resources necessary to implement these requirements. For these reasons, the Maryland Association of County Health Officers submits this letter of concern for SB 577. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at rmaiora1@jhu.edu or 410-937-1433. *This communication reflects the position of MACHO.*