

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2022 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**First Reader**

Senate Bill 456

(Senator Bailey)

Judicial Proceedings

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**Firearms - Handgun Qualification License - Firearms Orientation Component**

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This bill (1) authorizes the use of live or inert ammunition to be included as part of the firearms orientation component of a firearms safety training course for a Handgun Qualification License (HQL) and (2) prohibits a person from being required to fire rounds of live ammunition as part of the firearms orientation component.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** None. The change is procedural in nature and does not directly affect governmental finances.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** An HQL authorizes a person to purchase, rent, or receive a handgun. Generally, the Secretary of State Police must issue an HQL to a person who (1) is at least age 21; (2) is a State resident; (3) has completed a firearms safety training course; and (4) is not prohibited by federal or State law from purchasing or possessing a handgun.

The firearms safety training course must include (1) a minimum of four hours of instruction by a qualified handgun instructor; (2) classroom instruction on State firearm law, home firearm safety, and handgun mechanisms and operation; and (3) a firearms orientation component that demonstrates that the person can safely operate and handle a firearm. Under the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR 29.03.01.29), the firearms safety

training course must include a practice component in which the applicant safely fires at least one round of live ammunition.

Current law requirements and background relating to the issuance of an HQL are summarized in the **Appendix – Handgun Qualification License Requirements – Current Law/Background.**

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Designated Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Department of Natural Resources; Department of State Police; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 14, 2022  
fnu2/lgc

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## **Appendix**

### **Handgun Qualification License Requirements – Current Law/Background**

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A handgun qualification license (HQL) authorizes a person to purchase, rent, or receive a handgun. A licensed firearms manufacturer; a specified active or retired law enforcement officer; a member or retired member of the U.S. Armed Forces or the National Guard; and a person purchasing, renting, or receiving an antique, curio, or relic firearm (as defined under federal law) are exempt from the requirements of the licensing provisions.

The Secretary of State Police must apply for a State and national criminal history records check for each applicant. As part of the application for a criminal history records check, the Secretary must submit one complete set of fingerprints of the applicant.

The application fee for an HQL is to cover administrative costs and may be up to \$50. The term of the license is 10 years. License renewal fees are set at up to \$20. Generally, the Secretary of State Police must issue an HQL to a person who (1) is at least 21 years old; (2) is a State resident; (3) has completed a firearms safety training course; and (4) is not prohibited by federal or State law from purchasing or possessing a handgun.

The firearms safety training course must include (1) a minimum of four hours of instruction by a qualified handgun instructor; (2) classroom instruction on State firearm law, home firearm safety, and handgun mechanisms and operation; and (3) a firearms orientation that demonstrates that the person can safely operate and handle a firearm. An applicant is not required to complete an approved firearms safety training course if the applicant has previously completed a certified firearms training course, has completed a hunting safety course prescribed by the Department of Natural Resources, is currently a qualified handgun instructor, is an honorably discharged member of the U.S. Armed Forces or the National Guard, is a certain employee of an armored car company, or lawfully owns a regulated firearm. Renewal applicants are not required to complete the firearms safety training course or submit to a State and national criminal history records check.

The Secretary may issue an HQL without an additional application or fee to a person who meets the requirements for the issuance of a handgun permit who does not already have an HQL.

Within 30 days after receiving a properly completed HQL application, the Secretary must provide (1) an HQL, if approved, or (2) a written denial of the application, including the reason the application was denied and a statement of the applicant's appeal rights regarding the decision.

In 2021, the Department of State Police (DSP) received 45,500 new applications for HQLs. DSP denied 1,995 applications in the same year. There are currently approximately 236,521 active HQLs in the State (issued since October 1, 2013).