

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2023 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 756
Judiciary

(Delegates Grammer and Tomlinson)

Public Safety – Handgun Permits – Expunged Conviction

This bill alters the requirements for issuance of a permit to wear, carry, or transport a handgun (handgun permit) to clarify that a conviction expunged under Title 10 Subtitle 1 of the Criminal Procedure Article does not constitute a conviction for purposes of disqualification for a handgun permit.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect State finances.

Local Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect local finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law:

Handgun Permit: A person must have a handgun permit before the person carries, wears, or transports a handgun in the State. Generally, with certain exceptions, to be issued a handgun permit by the Secretary of State Police, an applicant (1) must be 18 or older; (2) must not have been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor for which a sentence of imprisonment for more than one year has been imposed or, if convicted, must have been pardoned or been granted relief under federal law; (3) must not have been convicted of a controlled dangerous substance (CDS) violation and must not presently be an addict, a habitual user of CDS, or an alcoholic; (4) must not exhibit a propensity for violence or instability, which may reasonably render possession of a handgun a danger to the applicant

or another; (5) must have successfully completed, prior to application and each renewal, a specified firearms training course approved by the Secretary; (6) if younger than 30, must not have been committed to a facility for juveniles for longer than one year or adjudicated delinquent for a crime of violence, a felony, or misdemeanor that carries a statutory penalty of more than two years; and (7) must have a good and substantial reason to wear, carry, or transport a handgun.

Existing statutory requirements and background relating to the issuance of handgun permits are summarized in the **Appendix – Handgun Permit Requirements – Current Law/Background**.

Expungement of Conviction: In general, a person seeking expungement of records pertaining to a criminal charge must file a petition for expungement with the court under § 10-105 or § 10-110 of the Criminal Procedure Article.

With some exceptions, § 10-105 applies to dispositions other than a conviction, and § 10-110 applies to expungements of convictions. While petitioners under both statutes must comply with specified waiting periods, a court is authorized to grant a petition for expungement filed under § 10-105(c)(9) at any time on a showing of good cause. This “good cause” provision addresses a court’s authority to grant a petition for expungement outside the statutory time requirements when all other eligibility criteria have been met. *In re Expungement Petition of Vincent S.*, Nos. 607 and 608, September Term 2021. Determinations of good cause are at the discretion of the court.

Section 10-110 of the Criminal Procedure Article authorizes an individual convicted of any of a list of approximately 100 specified offenses or an attempt, a conspiracy, or a solicitation of any of these offenses, to file a petition for expungement of the conviction, subject to specified procedures and requirements.

In general, a petition to expunge a misdemeanor conviction under § 10-110 cannot be filed earlier than 10 years after the person satisfies the sentence or sentences imposed for all convictions for which expungement is requested, including parole, probation, or mandatory supervision. A petition to expunge a conviction for second-degree assault, common law battery, a “domestically related crime,” or a felony may not be filed earlier than 15 years after the person satisfies the sentence or sentences imposed for all convictions for which expungement is requested, including parole, probation, or mandatory supervision. A person who is convicted of possession with the intent to distribute cannabis under § 5-602(b)(1) of the Criminal Law Article may file a petition for expungement of the conviction three years after satisfaction of the sentence(s) imposed for all convictions for which expungement is requested, including parole, probation, or mandatory supervision.

If the person is convicted of a new crime during the applicable waiting period, the original conviction or convictions are not eligible for expungement unless the new conviction becomes eligible for expungement.

A person is not eligible for expungement if the person is a defendant in a pending criminal proceeding.

Pursuant to § 10-107 of the Criminal Procedure Article, if two or more charges, other than one for a minor traffic violation or possession of cannabis under § 5-601 of the Criminal Law Article, arise from the same incident, transaction, or set of facts, they are considered to be a unit. A charge for a minor traffic violation or possession of cannabis under § 5-601 of the Criminal Law Article that arises from the same incident, transaction, or set of facts as a charge in the unit is not a part of the unit. If a person is not entitled to expungement of one charge or conviction in a unit, the person is not entitled to expungement of any other charge or conviction in the unit.

Additional Comments: Federal law does not regulate State handgun permits; however, under federal law certain convictions, even when expunged under State law, remain disqualifiers for possession of a firearm.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Department of State Police; Department of Legislative Services

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km/lgc

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Appendix

Handgun Permit Requirements – Current Law/Background

Generally, with certain exceptions, to be issued a handgun permit by the Secretary of State Police, an applicant (1) must be 18 or older; (2) must not have been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor for which a sentence of imprisonment for more than one year has been imposed or, if convicted, must have been pardoned or been granted relief under federal law; (3) must not have been convicted of a controlled dangerous substance violation and must not presently be an addict, a habitual user of a controlled dangerous substance, or an alcoholic; (4) must not exhibit a propensity for violence or instability, which may reasonably render possession of a handgun a danger to the applicant or another; (5) must have successfully completed, prior to application and each renewal, a specified firearms training course approved by the Secretary; (6) if younger than 30, must not have been committed to a facility for juveniles for longer than one year or adjudicated delinquent for a crime of violence, a felony, or misdemeanor that carries a statutory penalty of more than two years; and (7) must have a good and substantial reason to wear, carry, or transport a handgun. “Good and substantial reason” includes a finding that the permit is necessary as a reasonable precaution against apprehended danger. The Secretary may limit the geographic area, circumstances, or times of day, week, month, or year in which a permit is effective.

A handgun permit applicant must successfully complete, prior to the application and each renewal, a firearms training course approved by the Secretary that includes (1) for an initial application, a minimum of 16 hours of instruction by a qualified handgun instructor, or 8 hours of instruction for a renewal application; (2) classroom instruction on State firearm law, home firearm safety, and handgun mechanisms and operation; and (3) a firearms qualification component that demonstrates the applicant’s proficiency and use of the firearm.

An applicant for a permit is not required to complete a certified firearms training course if the applicant:

- is a law enforcement officer or a person who is retired in good standing from service with a law enforcement agency of the United States, the State, or any local law enforcement agency in the State;
- is a member, retired member, or honorably discharged member of the U.S. Armed Forces or the National Guard;
- is a qualified handgun instructor; or
- has completed a firearms training course approved by the Secretary.

A handgun permit application costs \$75; two years after the initial permit and every three years thereafter, a \$50 renewal fee is due. In addition, the applicant must pay for

fingerprint-based federal and State criminal history background checks for an initial application. A person who applies for a renewal of a handgun permit is not required to be fingerprinted unless the Secretary requires a set of the person's fingerprints to resolve a question of the person's identity.

Generally, a handgun permit expires on the last day of the holder's birth month following two years after the date the permit is issued; however, the Secretary may establish an alternative expiration date for a permit to coincide with the expiration of a private detective license, a security guard certification, or a special police officer commission. A permit may be renewed for successive periods of three years each if, at the time of an application for renewal, the applicant possesses the qualifications for the issuance of a permit and pays the renewal fee.

On June 23, 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association, Inc. v. Bruen*, 597 U.S. (2022), held unconstitutional a New York law that required applicants for a concealed carry handgun permit to demonstrate a "proper cause" (or a special need for self-defense) before issuance of a license to carry a handgun in public. In a 6-3 ruling, the Supreme Court held for the first time that the Second Amendment provides a constitutionally protected right for a law-abiding citizen to carry a handgun outside the home for self-defense.

Following the U.S. Supreme Court's decision, Maryland's Court of Special Appeals (now the Appellate Court of Maryland) applied *Bruen* directly to *In the Matter of William Rounds*, 255 Md. App. 205 (2022), ruling that Maryland's wear and carry handgun permit law requiring an applicant to have a "good and substantial reason" to be issued a license to carry was analogous to New York's "proper cause" requirement and was unconstitutional. On July 5, 2022, then Governor Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr., responded to the ruling by directing the Department of State Police (DSP) to immediately stop using the "good and substantial reason" requirement when reviewing handgun permits in the State. On July 6, 2022, the Office of the Attorney General issued a similar letter advising on the constitutionality and severability of the "good and substantial reason" from the State's handgun permit statute while affirming all other requirements for a handgun permit remain in effect.

According to DSP, there has been a substantial increase in handgun permit applications in Maryland since the *Bruen* ruling. In 2022, DSP received 85,266 new applications for handgun permits (up from a total of 12,189 in 2021) and 8,891 handgun permit renewal applications. DSP denied 1,787 applications in the same year. As of January 20, 2023, there are approximately 113,964 active handgun permits in the State (up from 26,119 active handgun permits in the State at the end of 2021). It generally takes less than 2 days to receive the results of a national criminal history records check from the FBI and approximately 90 days to process, investigate, and issue a permit.