

**Department of Legislative Services**  
 Maryland General Assembly  
 2025 Session

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

Senate Bill 577 (Senator Lam)  
 Judicial Proceedings

**Public Safety - Distribution of Literature to Purchasers of Firearms and Ammunition**

This bill requires the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to (1) prepare literature with specified information relating to firearms and ammunition and (2) distribute the literature to all county health departments in the State. Each county health department must then distribute the literature to all establishments that sell firearms or ammunition within the county. An establishment that receives such literature must make the literature visible and available at the point of sale for any firearm or ammunition purchase and distribute the literature to each person who purchases a firearm or ammunition. Each county health department must authorize a representative to issue citations to establishment owners who are in violation of the bill’s requirements. A person who violates the bill is subject to specified maximum civil penalties payable to the county that issued the citation.

**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** General fund expenditures increase by at least \$25,000 in FY 2026. Future year expenditures reflect inflation and minimum ongoing costs. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	25,000	25,300	25,500	25,800	26,000
Net Effect	(\$25,000)	(\$25,300)	(\$25,500)	(\$25,800)	(\$26,000)

*Note: () = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease*

**Local Effect:** Local health department (LHD) expenditures increase to distribute the required literature and conduct enforcement. Potential increase in county revenues to the extent that civil penalties are imposed and collected. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal or none.

## Analysis

**Bill Summary:** A violator is subject to a maximum civil penalty of (1) \$500 for a first violation and (2) \$1,000 for a second or subsequent violation. A civil penalty imposed under the bill must be paid to the county that issued the citation.

### **Current Law:**

#### *Handgun Qualification License*

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.

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 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.

#### *Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention*

Chapters 706 and 707 of 2024 established the Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention in MDH. The purpose of the center is to reduce firearm violence, harm from firearm violence, and misuse of firearms in the State by partnering with federal, State, and local agencies and affected communities to implement a public health approach to firearm violence reduction.

The center must (1) work in consultation with the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP), the Department of State Police (DSP), and any other relevant State

or local agency to ensure a multi-departmental approach to reducing firearm violence and (2) solicit and consider recommendations from communities disproportionately impacted by firearm violence, public health experts, individuals or organizations with expertise in firearm safety and training, and any other experts, groups, or organizations the executive director determines to be appropriate and necessary.

The center may:

- apply for, receive, and spend federal funds made available to MDH for use in carrying out the powers and duties of the Secretary or MDH;
- offer training and technical assistance to State and local agencies, health care professionals, and community and faith-based organizations to increase capacity to implement evidence-based firearm violence prevention and intervention strategies;
- issue best practice guidance and model processes in consultation with affected communities regarding implementation of evidence-based firearm violence prevention and intervention strategies;
- facilitate cross-jurisdictional data and information sharing in consultation with GOCPP;
- conduct public awareness campaigns;
- share data and collaborate with higher education and research institutions regarding the prevention of firearm violence;
- promote the development of evidence-based firearm violence prevention initiatives in affected communities throughout the State; and
- engage in any other activity consistent with the center's mission.

**State Expenditures:** According to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, there are approximately 750 dealers with federal firearms licenses in the State; however, many licensed dealers do not have a formal establishment. According to DSP, in 2024, there were approximately 100,000 applications for firearm sales in the State. Ammunition can be sold at establishments that do not hold a federal firearms license and ammunition purchases are not tracked in the State. Thus, MDH needs to publish enough literature to distribute to LHDs in the State for further distribution to all establishments that sell firearms or ammunition within each county. Accordingly, general fund expenditures increase by at least \$25,000 in fiscal 2026 for MDH to publish and make available sufficient copies of the required literature.

As information required to be included within the literature may change each year, this analysis assumes that MDH needs to update and publish new copies of the literature annually. Accordingly, future year expenditures reflect inflation and minimum ongoing costs to publish sufficient copies of the literature each year. Actual expenditures in any

given year could vary depending on the demand for the literature and the need to publish literature in languages other than English.

MDH can likely handle preparation of the required literature with existing staff.

**Local Revenues:** To the extent that LHDs issue citations for violations, county revenues increase from any civil penalties imposed and collected.

**Local Expenditures:** Expenditures increase for LHDs to distribute the required literature and conduct enforcement. The Maryland Association of County Health Officers advises that LHDs do not currently have sufficient staff to distribute the required literature and conduct the compliance checks; therefore, LHDs likely need to hire additional staff to meet the bill's requirements. A reliable estimate of the resulting increase in expenditures for LHDs cannot be made at this time.

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### Additional Information

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

**Designated Cross File:** HB 713 (Delegate Simmons, *et al.*) - Judiciary.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Association of County Health Officers; Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Maryland Department of Health; Department of State Police; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives; Department of Legislative Services

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