

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 820
 Judiciary

(Delegate Hornberger, *et al.*)

Handgun Permits - Special Endorsement for Security Clearance Holders

This bill requires that a permit to wear, carry, or transport a handgun issued by the Secretary of State Police must bear a special endorsement that shows that the permit holder has enhanced privileges to wear, carry, or transport a handgun if, based on a background investigation, the Secretary determines that the permit holder is (1) a current employee of the U.S. government who currently holds Top Secret/Sensitive Compartmented Information security clearance or (2) a retired employee of the U.S. government who held such a security clearance for at least 10 consecutive years immediately preceding retirement. Notwithstanding any law or ordinance that prohibits the wearing, carrying, or transporting of a handgun at a place, a person who has a permit bearing the special endorsement may wear, carry, or transport a handgun at any place where a law enforcement official is authorized to wear, carry, or transport a handgun in the performance of the official’s duties. The Secretary must adopt regulations necessary to carry out the bill.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by an estimated \$50,000 in FY 2027 only for one-time computer programming changes. Revenues are not materially affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	50,000	0	0	0	0
Net Effect	(\$50,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

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

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law:

Handgun Permit Required

A person must have a handgun permit issued by the Secretary of State Police before the person carries, wears, or transports a handgun in the State. Existing statutory requirements and background relating to the issuance of handgun permits are summarized in the **Appendix – Handgun Permit Requirements – Current Law/Background**.

Wearing, Carrying, or Transporting a Firearm – Specified Areas

Chapter 680 of 2023 generally prohibits a person from wearing, carrying, or transporting a firearm in an area for children or vulnerable individuals, a government or public infrastructure area, or a special purpose area, as defined. A government or public infrastructure area that is a building or any part of a building owned or leased by a unit of State or local government must display a clear and conspicuous sign at the main entrance indicating that it is not permissible to wear, carry, or transport a firearm in the building or that part of the building.

Nothing within these provisions limits the power of an administrative head of a Maryland court to punish for contempt or to adopt rules or orders regulating, allowing, restricting, or prohibiting the possession of weapons in any building housing the court or any of its proceedings, or on any grounds appurtenant to the building.

The above listed prohibitions generally do not apply to:

- a law enforcement official or a police officer;
- an on-duty employee of a law enforcement agency authorized by the agency to possess firearms on duty or whose duty assignment involves the possession of firearms;
- a service member on duty or traveling to or from duty;
- a member of a Reserve Officer Training Corps program, as specified;
- a correctional officer or a warden of a correctional facility in the State;
- a railroad police officer appointed under Title 3, Subtitle 4 of the Public Safety Article;
- an employee of an armored car company, as specified;
- a person who has retired as a law enforcement official in good standing from a law enforcement agency of the United States, the State, another state, or a local unit in the State or another state who possesses a firearm, as specified;

- for a location that is not owned by, leased by, or otherwise under the control of the State or a political subdivision of the State, the owner or lessee of the location or a person who is authorized by the owner or lessee of the location to wear, carry, or transport a firearm at the location for the purpose of employment as a licensed security guard or protecting any individual or property at the location with an express agreement between the parties, remuneration, or compensation;
- a location being used with the permission of the person or governmental unit that owns, leases, or controls the location for specified purposes; or
- a firearm that is carried or transported in a motor vehicle if the firearm is locked in a container or is a handgun worn, carried, or transported in compliance with specified statutory limitations by a person to whom a handgun permit has been issued.

Wearing, Carrying, or Transporting a Firearm – Dwellings and Real Property

Chapter 680 also generally prohibits a person wearing, carrying, or transporting a firearm from entering or trespassing in the dwelling of another unless the owner or the owner's agent has given express permission, either to the person or the public generally, to wear, carry, or transport a firearm inside the dwelling. In addition, a person wearing, carrying, or transporting a firearm may not (1) enter or trespass on property unless the owner or the owner's agent has posted a clear and conspicuous sign indicating that it is permissible to wear, carry, or transport a firearm on the property or (2) enter or trespass on property unless the owner or the owner's agent has given the person express permission to wear, carry, or transport a firearm on the property.

The above prohibitions do not apply to:

- a law enforcement official or a police officer;
- an on-duty employee of a law enforcement agency authorized by the agency to possess firearms on duty or whose duty assignment involves the possession of firearms;
- a member of the U.S. Armed Forces, the National Guard, or the uniformed services, as specified;
- a correctional officer or warden of a correctional facility in the State;
- the wearing, carrying, or transporting of a firearm on a portion of real property subject to an easement, a right-of-way, a servitude, or any other property interest that allows public access on or through the real property; or
- the wearing, carrying, or transporting of a firearm on a portion of real property subject to an easement, a right-of-way, a servitude, or any other property interest allowing access on or through the real property by the holder of the easement, right-of-way, servitude, or other property interest or a guest or assignee of the holder of the easement, right-of-way, servitude, or other property interest.

Section 4-201 of the Criminal Law Article defines a “law enforcement official” as (1) a full-time member of a police force or other unit of the United States, a state, a county, a municipality, or other political subdivision of a state who is responsible for the prevention and detection of crime and the enforcement of the laws of the applicable jurisdiction; (2) a part-time member of a police force of a county or municipality who is certified by that jurisdiction as being trained and qualified in the use of handguns; or (3) a fire and explosive investigator employed by a specified county or city.

In a decision filed August 2, 2024 (*Kipke v. Moore*, No. GLR-23-1293, 2024 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 137003), among other things, the District Court of Maryland held that that the State’s ban on carrying firearms in several “sensitive places” violates the Second Amendment and enjoined its enforcement. On January 20, 2026, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld most of the law, affirming the State’s authority to prohibit firearms in crowded or sensitive locations.

State Expenditures: The Department of State Police advises that the firearm application, which is now automated, needs to be reprogrammed as a result of the bill. Accordingly, general fund expenditures increase by an estimated \$50,000 in fiscal 2027 only for one-time programming changes.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of State Police; Maryland Municipal League; Department of Legislative Services

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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 at least age 21 or a member of the uniformed services or the National Guard; (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 be on supervised probation for conviction of a crime punishable by imprisonment for one year or more, a violation of § 21-902(b) or (c) of the Transportation Article (driving while under the influence or driving while impaired), or violating a protective order under § 4-509 of the Family Law Article (failure to comply with interim or final protective order); (5) must not suffer from a mental disorder and have a history of violent behavior against the person or another; (6) must not have been involuntarily admitted for more than 30 consecutive days to a facility that provides treatment or other services for mental disorders; (7) must not be a respondent against whom a current non *ex parte* civil protective order has been entered under § 4-506 of the Family Law Article, a current extreme risk protective order has been entered under § 5-601 of the Public Safety Article, or any other type of current court order has been entered prohibiting the person from purchasing or possessing firearms; (8) must not exhibit a propensity for violence or instability, which may reasonably render possession of a handgun a danger to the applicant or another; (9) must have successfully completed, prior to application and each renewal, a specified firearms training course approved by the Secretary; (10) 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 (11) must not otherwise be prohibited by State or federal law from possessing a handgun.

The Secretary may not issue a handgun permit to a person who has been convicted on or after October 1, 2023, of a second or subsequent violation of § 4-104 of the Criminal Law Article (child access to firearms) or has been convicted on or after October 1, 2023, of a violation of that provision if the violation resulted in the use of a loaded firearm by a minor causing death or serious bodily injury to the minor or another person. The Secretary also may not issue a handgun permit to a person who has been convicted on or after October 1, 2023, of a violation of § 4-104 of the Criminal Law Article for five years following the date of the conviction.

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 and federal firearm laws, home firearm safety, handgun mechanisms and operations, conflict de-escalation and resolution, anger management, and suicide prevention; and (3) a firearm qualification component that includes live-fire shooting exercise on a firing range and requires the applicant to demonstrate safe handling of a handgun and shooting proficiency with a handgun.

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 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 \$125; two years after the initial permit and every three years thereafter, a \$75 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.

In 2025, the Department of State Police (DSP) received 37,786 new applications for handgun permits and 78,554 handgun permit renewal applications. DSP denied 1,693 applications in the same year. As of January 2026, there are approximately 198,164 active handgun permits in the State. It generally takes less than two days to receive

the results of a national criminal history records check from the Federal Bureau of Investigation and approximately seven days to process and issue a permit.