SB 620

Department of Legislative Services

Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 620 (Senators Watson and West)
Judicial Proceedings

Criminal Law - Wearing, Carrying, or Transporting a Handgun - Prior Convictions

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This bill expands the convictions that qualify a defendant for subsequent offender enhanced sentencing provisions for violations related to wearing, carrying, or transporting a handgun to include prior convictions from another state or a federal, military, or a Native American tribal court that, if committed in Maryland, would constitute a violation of § 4-203 (wearing, carrying, or transporting a handgun), § 4-204 (use of handgun or antique firearm in commission of crime), § 4-101 (dangerous weapons), or § 4-102 (deadly weapons on school property) of the Criminal Law Article.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not expected to materially affect State finances and operations.

Local Effect: The bill is not expected to materially affect local finances or operations.

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

Prohibitions: With specified exceptions, including possession of a handgun permit, a person may not (1) wear, carry, or transport a handgun, whether concealed or open, on or about the person; (2) wear, carry, or knowingly transport a handgun, whether concealed or open, in a vehicle traveling on a road or parking lot generally used by the public, highway, waterway, or airway of the State; (3) violate items (1) or (2) listed above while on public school property in the State; (4) violate items (1) or (2) listed above with the deliberate purpose of injuring or killing another person; or (5) violate items (1) or (2) listed above with a handgun loaded with ammunition. There is a rebuttable presumption that a person who transports a handgun does so knowingly. A violator is guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to the penalties listed below. The subsequent offender provisions apply to previous convictions under § 4-203 (wearing, carrying, or transporting a handgun), § 4-204 (use of handgun or antique firearm in commission of crime), § 4-101 (dangerous weapons), and § 4-102 (deadly weapons on school property) of the Criminal Law Article, as shown in **Exhibit 1**.

Exhibit 1
Penalties for Specified Handgun Violations

First-time Offender – No prior convictions under §§ 4-203, 4-204, 4-101, or 4-102 of the Criminal Law Article	In General – Imprisonment for at least 30 days and up to 5 years and/or fine of $250 to $2,500. Offense on Public School Property – Imprisonment for at least 90 days.
Subsequent Offender – One prior conviction under §§ 4-203, 4-204, 4-101, or 4-102 of the Criminal Law Article	In General – Imprisonment for at least 1 year and up to 10 years. Offense on Public School Property – Imprisonment for at least 3 years and up to 10 years. Court may not impose less than the applicable minimum sentence. Offense with handgun loaded with ammunition – With required notice, court may not suspend any part of or impose less than the applicable mandatory minimum sentence. Person is not eligible for parole during mandatory minimum sentence.*
Subsequent Offender – More than one prior conviction under §§ 4-203, 4-204, 4-101, or 4-102 of the Criminal Law Article	In General – Imprisonment for at least 3 years and up to 10 years. Offense on Public School Property – Imprisonment for at least 5 years and up to 10 years. Offense with Deliberate Purpose of Injuring or Killing Another Person – Imprisonment for at least 5 years and up to 10 years. Court may not impose less than the applicable minimum sentence. Offense with handgun loaded with ammunition – With required notice, court may not suspend any part of or impose less than the applicable mandatory minimum sentence. Person is not eligible for parole during mandatory minimum sentence.*

* Contains exception for § 4-305 of the Correctional Services Article (parole for an inmate at the Patuxent Institution).

Source: Department of Legislative Services

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: HB 1061 (Delegate Williams) - Judiciary.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy; Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Office of the Public Defender; Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; Department of State Police; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 16, 2026
jg/aad

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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.