

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2026 Session

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

Senate Bill 677

(Senator Folden)

Judicial Proceedings

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**Public Safety – Handgun Permits – Firearms Training Course**

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This bill alters the classroom instruction requirements for the firearms training course that an applicant for a permit to wear, carry, or transport a handgun must successfully complete prior to an initial application and each renewal. Specifically, the bill repeals required components of classroom instruction on (1) State and federal firearm laws relating to several specified items and (2) handgun mechanisms and operations. Instead, the bill requires classroom instruction on (1) handgun nomenclature and selecting a handgun for self-defense; (2) ammunition knowledge and defensive ammunition selection; (3) basic defensive handgun skills; (4) drawing a handgun from concealment; (5) loading and stoppage remediation; (6) mindset, including responding to an attack and the aftermath of an attack; (7) handgun concealment and carry modes; and (8) safe firearm storage, cleaning, and maintenance.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** The bill is not anticipated to materially affect State government finances or operations. Any changes can be handled with existing budgeted resources.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Bill Summary:** The bill repeals required components of classroom instruction on (1) State and federal firearm laws relating to the safe storage of firearms, the circumstances under which an individual becomes prohibited from possessing a firearm under State and

federal law, the requirements and options for surrendering, transferring, or otherwise disposing of a firearm after becoming prohibited from possessing a firearm under State or federal law, the requirements for reporting a loss or theft of a firearm to a law enforcement agency, as specified, the firearms and firearm accessories banned under State and federal law, the types of firearms that require a special permit or registration to acquire or possess under State or federal law, the law prohibiting straw purchases and (2) handgun mechanisms and operations. Other required components of classroom instruction are unchanged.

**Current Law:** A person must have a handgun permit before the person carries, wears, or transports a handgun in the State.

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 (discussed in more detail below), 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.

The classroom instruction on State and federal firearm laws must include instruction on laws relating to (1) self-defense; (2) defense of others; (3) defense of property; (4) the safe storage of firearms; (5) the circumstances under which an individual becomes prohibited from possessing a firearm under State and federal law, as specified; (6) the requirements and options for surrendering, transferring, or otherwise disposing of a firearm after becoming prohibited from possessing a firearm under State or federal law; (7) the requirements for reporting a loss or theft of a firearm to a law enforcement agency, as specified; (8) the firearms and firearm accessories banned under State and federal law; (9) the types of firearms that require a special permit or registration to acquire or possess under State or federal law; (10) the law prohibiting straw purchases; (11) the law concerning armed trespass, as specified; and (12) the locations where a person is prohibited from possessing a firearm regardless of whether the person possesses a handgun permit.

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

## **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; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 27, 2026  
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## **Appendix – Handgun Permit Requirements – Current Law/Background**

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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.