



# **RACIAL EQUITY IMPACT NOTE**

DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES  
MARYLAND ▪ GENERAL ▪ ASSEMBLY

2026 Session  
HB0303

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## **Handguns - Wear, Carry, and Transport Laws - Handbook Publication**

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### **Bill Summary**

This bill requires the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), by October 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, to publish a handbook summarizing all State laws, federal laws, and case law that are applicable to the wearing, carrying, and transporting of a handgun in public in the State. OAG must draft the handbook (1) in plain language that can be easily understood without any special knowledge of the applicable State laws, federal laws, or case law and (2) in a format that can be easily used to teach a required firearm safety course.

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### **Racial Equity Impact Statement**

The bill's goal of educating handgun permit owners about changes in firearm-related laws could be beneficial to all permit holders and the overall impacts of the bill will likely depend on its implementation. Department of State Police (DSP) data shows that Black permit holders comprise 37% of the total population of permit holders, but the equity impacts of the bill cannot be determined without handgun violation data, including handgun permit revocation activity.

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### **Analysis**

The bill requires OAG to annually publish a plain language handbook summarizing all State law, federal law, and case law applicable to the wearing, carrying, and transporting of a handgun in public in the State.

A person must have a handgun permit to carry, wear, or transport a handgun in the State. Generally, a person applying for a handgun carry permit must submit an application to DSP, complete

required firearms safety training, undergo fingerprinting and a background check, and pay the applicable fees. To qualify, the applicant must be at least 21 years old (with specified exceptions), not prohibited from possessing a firearm under state or federal law, not have any specified criminal convictions, have a history of violent behavior, or have any disqualifying mental health commitments.

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.

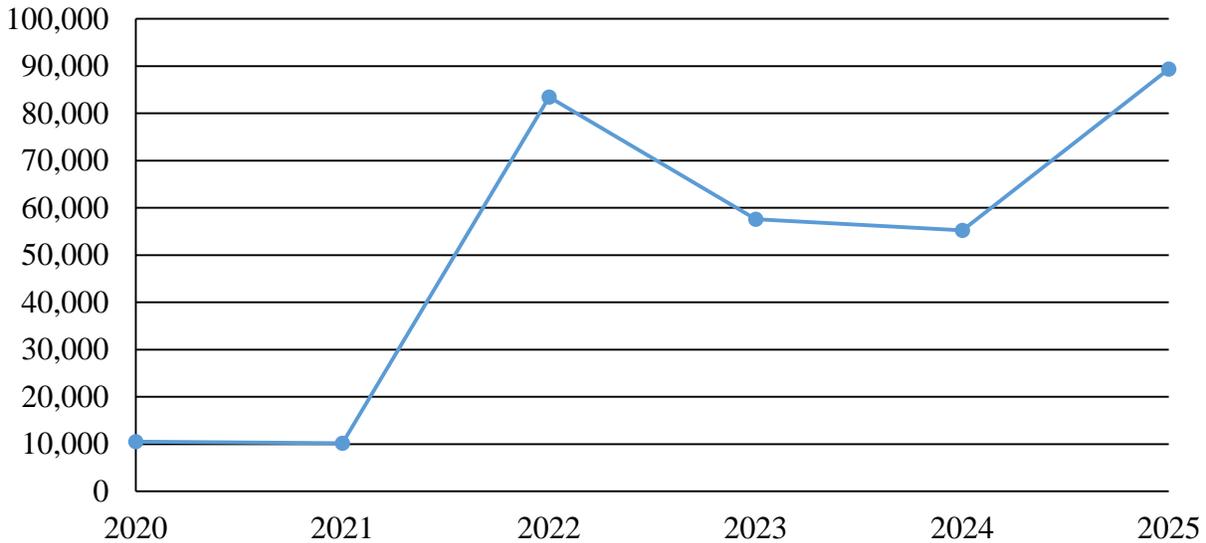
Chapter 651 of 2023 requires DSP to transmit a summary of each new law or change to each existing law pertaining to firearms that was passed by the General Assembly during each legislative session to each email address on file with the department that is associated with (1) the purchaser or transferee of a regulated firearm or (2) a person who has registered a regulated firearm with the department. The summary must be transmitted (1) within 45 days after the General Assembly adjourns Sine Die in a legislative session; (2) 30 days before the effective date of the act, for each act establishing a new law or change to an existing law pertaining to firearms; and (3) as soon as practicable if an act is designated as an emergency act.

### *Impacts of the Bill*

Maryland experienced a significant increase in handgun permit holders after the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association, Inc. v. Bruen*, 597 U.S. (2022), which held that residents of a state do not have to prove a special need for self-defense to get a permit to carry a handgun in public. This relaxed the standard for approval of carry permits in many states, including Maryland, which had required a “good and substantial reason” to be issued a license to carry. Post *Bruen*, in 2022, DSP received 85,266 new applications for handgun permits, of which 98% were approved, as compared to the 12,189 new permit applications filed in 2021. **Exhibit 1** shows the growth in approved permits from 2020 (pre-*Bruen*) to 2025.

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**Exhibit 1**  
**Maryland Approved Wear and Carry Firearm Permits**  
**2020-2025**



Source: Department of State Police

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Under the bill, permit holders would receive updates on federal law and case law, in addition to changes in State law. Case law changes, in particular, could be impactful to permit holders. For example, in a decision filed August 2, 2024, the District Court of Maryland held that the State's ban on carrying firearms in several sensitive locations violates the Second Amendment and enjoined its enforcement. On January 20, 2026, the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld most of the law, affirming the State's authority to prohibit firearms in crowded or sensitive locations. As this litigation proceeds on appeal, current handgun permit holders benefit from being aware of which specific restrictions may result in permit revocation or arrest.

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## **Conclusion**

The bill's creation of an annually published plain language handbook of developments in State, federal, and case law regarding the wearing, carrying, and transporting of firearms would be useful to current permit holders to stay informed about law changes. The changing legal environment for permit holders, along with the rapid rise in permit holders, makes any law changes impactful for public safety in the State. The bill's specific impacts are dependent on implementation and whether handgun permit holders consume the information in the handbook. Any equity effects would require demographic analysis of the basis for permit revocations, which is not currently available. DSP data, however, shows that only 99 individuals had their permits revoked between November 2024 and November 2025.

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**Information Sources:** Department of State Police; Administrative Office of the Courts;  
Department of Legislative Services

**Analysis by:** Rafael Regales

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# Appendix – Maryland Demographics

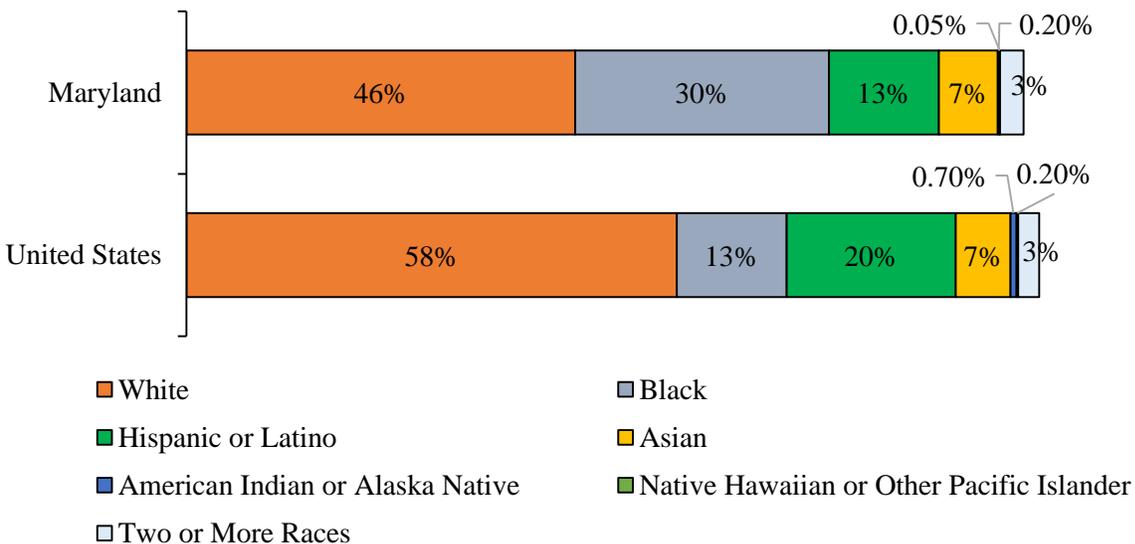
## *Race and Ethnicity of the Maryland Population*

Maryland’s 2020 census population is 6,177,244, a 7% increase from the 2010 census count and approximately 2% higher than the 2019 census population estimates. Maryland remains one of the most racially and ethnically diverse states in the nation and is ranked as the fourth most diverse state by the U.S. Census Bureau’s [Diversity Index](#). While no single racial or ethnic group constitutes a majority, racial minorities as a group constitute a majority of the State’s population. This diversity underpins the analytical framework used in racial equity impact notes (REIN), which seek to identify potential disparities that may be exacerbated or created by proposed criminal justice legislation.

## *Methodology Update*

Beginning in 2025, REIN will use annual population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Population Estimates Program (PEP) as the basis for disparity and disproportionality calculations. This methodological update reflects best practices in demographic analysis, as PEP data incorporate births, deaths, and migration to provide the most current population counts between censuses. Although the estimates are more temporally responsive, they do not materially change the proportionate racial and ethnic breakdown observed in the 2020 census. Instead, they conservatively reflect population changes since 2020 while preserving the overall demographic composition of the State.

**U.S. and Maryland Population by Race and Ethnicity  
2024 Population Estimates**



Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau