



# **RACIAL EQUITY IMPACT NOTE**

DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES  
MARYLAND ▪ GENERAL ▪ ASSEMBLY

2026 Session  
HB0875

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

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### **Bill Summary**

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.

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### **Racial Equity Impact Statement**

The bill's firearm literature distribution requirements could provide beneficial educational materials for retail firearm and ammunition purchasers, but the specific impacts of the bill depend on the extent to which the distributed materials reach those individuals most impacted by firearm violence, among other things. MDH data shows that Black individuals are significantly overrepresented in the rate of fatal and nonfatal firearm injuries in Maryland. Additional data, including data on firearm purchases, possession, and use, is needed to determine specific impacts.

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### **Analysis**

The bill requires MDH to prepare and distribute literature on firearm safety and training, suicide prevention, mental health awareness, and conflict resolution for distribution to all county health departments in the State. County health departments, in turn, must distribute the literature to all

firearm or ammunition retailers in the county. The bill further provides procedures for retailers to make the literature available and establishes penalties for retailers that do not comply.

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 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*

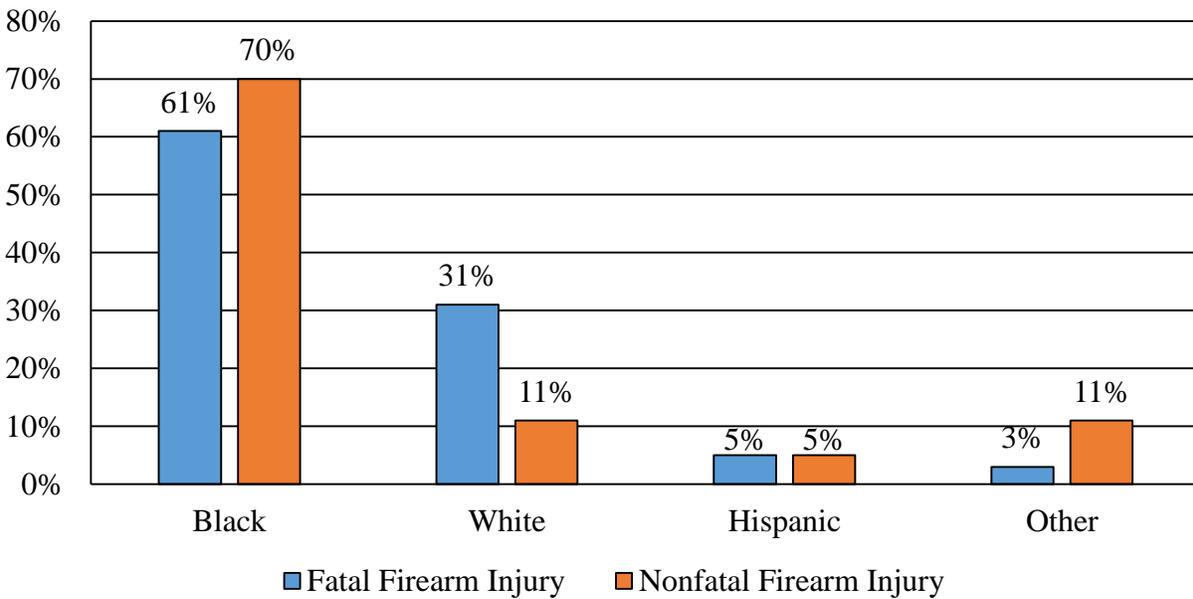
Chapters 706 and 707 of 2024 established the Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention in MDH. The purpose of the center is to reduce firearm violence, harm from firearm violence, and misuse of firearms in the State by partnering with federal, State, and local agencies and affected communities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

#### *Impacts of the Bill*

MDH reported 2,136 fatal and nonfatal firearm-related incidents in Maryland as extrapolated from hospital visits statewide between 2022 and 2024. As shown in **Exhibit 1**, during that time period, Black individuals accounted for 61% of all fatal injuries and 70% of nonfatal injuries. Of the total firearm-related fatalities, 61% were homicides, 38% were suicides, and less than 1% were unintentional deaths.

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**Exhibit 1**  
**Maryland Fatal and Nonfatal Firearm-related Injuries**  
**2022-2024**



Source: Maryland Department of Health

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## Conclusion

The available demographic data shows that Black communities are disproportionately victimized by gun violence. While safety-related informational literature regarding firearms is generally beneficial to purchasers, the bill's overall impacts on minority groups in the State are likely mixed and would primarily depend on the effectiveness of the bill's public awareness efforts and the extent to which individuals in the communities most affected by firearm violence obtain their firearms from firearm retailers. Additional historical and comprehensive data would be needed to fully assess the bill's impacts, including data on the racial and ethnic distribution of firearm ownership, use, and possession, the number of firearm permit applications granted, revoked, and denied, as well as related mental health data.

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**Information Sources:** Maryland Department of Health; Department of State Police; Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy; Department of Legislative Services

**Analysis by:** Rafael Regales

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# Appendix – Maryland Demographics

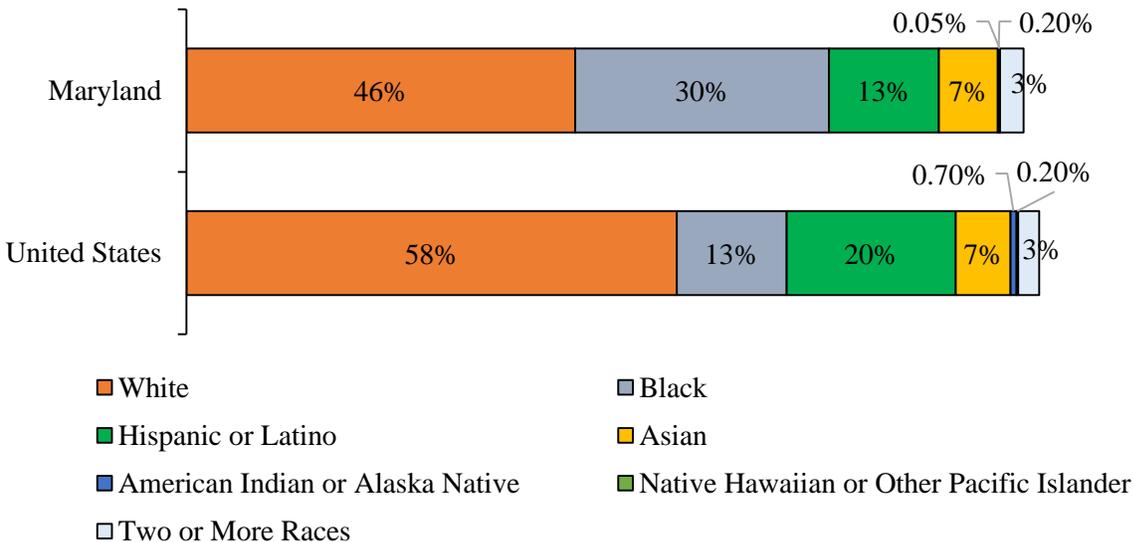
## *Race and Ethnicity of the Maryland Population*

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