
BILL NO: Senate Bill 198
TITLE: Criminal Procedure – Permit to Wear, Carry, and Transport Handguns –
Qualifications
COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings
HEARING DATE: January 30, 2019
POSITION: **OPPOSE**

Senate Bill 198 would change the standard set out in our law to obtain a permit for a handgun. The Women's Law Center opposes this bill as we do not think that introducing more guns into peoples' hands increases safety to our constituency.

Under current law, an applicant for a handgun permit must have a "good and substantial reason to wear, carry, or transport a handgun such as a finding that the permit is necessary as a reasonable precaution against an apprehended danger." SB 198 would add the terms "personal protection" or "self-defense" to this standard, making it a per se acceptable reason to be issued a wear and carry permit. Based on our collective experience, we know that the introduction of firearms in domestic violence situations increases the possibility of serious injury or lethality. Given this information, it is unlikely that we would encourage any client coping with a volatile domestic violence situation to get a handgun for personal protection or self-defense. It is more likely than not that the gun would be used against her. We see no need for the language of the current law to add terms that may result in more harm than good in domestic violence cases.

Therefore, the WLC opposes Senate Bill 198 and urges an unfavorable report.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, membership organization that serves as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women. It advocates for the rights of women through legal assistance to individuals and strategic initiatives to achieve systemic change. The Women's Law Center operates two hotlines, Protection Order Advocacy and Representation Projects in Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Carroll County, and the Multi-Ethnic Domestic Violence Project.