

February 6, 2020

I am a member of Multiple Gun Rights organizations. Maryland Shall Issue, Associated Gun Clubs, Maryland State Rifle and Pistol Association, and the National Rifle Association. I am a certified Range Safety Officer with the NRA. I compete in multiple shooting events such as Steel Challenge, 3-gun, small bore, and vintage military rifle matches. I am an avid firearms collector. I am a citizen of the state of Maryland who wishes to see criminals actually punished for their behaviors, and to see crime reduced. I support SB 273.

This bill is sorely needed. The revolving door of the criminal justice system in this state is appalling. From an article published by the Baltimore Sun (<https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-md-ci-gun-arrest-prosecutions-20161022-story.html>), When people are caught with illegal guns, a quarter of them have charges dropped before going to trial. Upon convictions, defendants receive an average sentence of 16 months, with a large portion of their sentence suspended. Police say the number is much lower, about 6 months. Also, the article states that the Prosecutor says that when convicted of having a gun in a vehicle illegally, that only 6% of the total sentence is served, 15% is served for carrying illegally, and only 25% of a sentence is served for a felon possessing a firearm. The article goes on to discuss some of the issues faced in prosecuting these crimes, and the failures to address this issue.

Of note in this bill are the increased penalties for theft of a firearm. Under current law, this is treated as simple theft. The penalties do not even disqualify the perpetrator from purchasing a firearm in the future. I think common sense would tell us that this should be a disqualifying crime. I still find it disappointing that under this bill, the penalties for first time theft of a firearm are still less than loaning a firearm, as spelled out in HB4.

This bill elevates most crimes related to illegal use of a firearm to felony from a misdemeanor. It also states mandatory minimum sentences. All of these are important tools to keep violent criminals off the streets. Mandatory minimum sentences can eliminate personal bias in sentencing. All who commit specific crimes are treated equally. There are no penalties that are too lenient or harsh based upon sympathy or prejudices. Keeping our most violent offenders off the streets does prevent crime. They cannot commit murder in our neighborhoods if they are in jail. Our laws must have teeth in order to be effective.

This session alone, this body has proposed numerous laws that primarily affect legal, innocent activities. There has been legislation focused on long guns, which are almost never used in crime. This bill aims to actually make real progress in the fight against crime using firearms, targeting those who are actually using them in crime. If we sincerely wish to have an impact on violent crime in this state, we must pass this bill.

Many of you may have heard of Radee Prince. This is the man accused of shooting 5 coworkers at Advanced Granite in Edgewood, killing 3. He then drove to Delaware and shot a man in the face, intending to kill him as well. Fortunately that man survived. Even though he faced lesser charges in Delaware, the decision was made to try him there first, because he would face tougher penalties, and serve more of his sentence if found guilty. That statement right there is appalling. That he would serve more of his sentence for attempted murder, than murder in Maryland. He was indeed found guilty of attempted manslaughter, and various

other related charges there, and has been sentenced to 40 years. He is still awaiting trial in Maryland. This could have been prevented if weapons charges he faced in 2015, just 2 years prior, were followed through on. He was stopped in Cecil County for a traffic stop, and started to get agitated. It was found that he had a warrant, and a search of his car discovered a handgun. Prince had at least a dozen felony convictions, and was a prohibited person. At the hearing, prosecutors decided to drop the case, asserting it was at the request of the arresting deputy. The Sheriff's office however, says that the deputy showed up, ready to go to trial. At the time, the weapons charges he faced could have gotten him 9 years in prison. That may have saved his victims lives.

Because of these reasons above, I request a favorable report.

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