

WESTERN MARYLAND SPORTSMEN'S COALITION, INC.

Garrett Allegany Washington Frederick Carroll

February 3, 2020

Honorable Members of the
Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Md. 21401

**Subject: SB -0208 Public Safety - Rifles and Shotguns – Secondary Transactions
OPPOSE**

Dear Honorable Senators:

My name is Ben Kelkye and I currently hold the office of President of the Western Maryland Sportsmen's Coalition, Inc. (WMSC) The Coalition is an organization that consists of nearly twenty-six thousand individual members of many sportsmen's clubs of the five western Maryland counties of Garrett, Allegany, Washington, Frederick and Carroll. We meet regularly with authorized representatives of our members' sporting clubs, their designated county representatives and members of other associations & organizations affiliated with our sport.

Briefly stated, our mission is to provide recognition and publicity for area sportsmen and conservation clubs engaged in wildlife management and/or the preservation of land, water, and open space resources and to provide a forum in which each member organization may present and discuss its local memberships' views on such issues.

We strive to promote and protect the right of every law-abiding citizen to keep and bear arms and ammunition for self-defense and for all other lawful purposes, including shooting sports, and to provide the sportsmen and conservationists of Western Maryland an opportunity to present a united and more effective voice in matters relating to the environment and fish and game management.

I, as a private citizen of this State, together with the thousands of club members that are the heart of the Western Maryland Sportsmen's Coalition, Inc. **strongly urge you to oppose SB-0208, Titled: Public Safety - Rifles & Shotguns – Secondary Transactions.**

According to the National Fish & Wildlife Service and our own Department of Natural Resources there are nearly 88,000 licensed hunters in our state that spend approximately \$240 million per

year in hunting related activities that mainly utilize sporting long-guns. Of that \$240 million, about \$120 million is spent on a nearly endless list of related gear and hardware such as optics, clothing, shells and the like. In addition, many thousands of other folks utilize shotguns and rifles in both competitive and/or recreational shooting events such as still targets, trap, skeet and sporting clays. These folks spend millions of dollars more each year in their individual pursuits.

For well over two hundred years citizens of the farmland and forested areas of our state have bought, sold and traded rifles and shotguns for hunting and sport as a matter of routine life. It has become a tradition in rural Maryland. In the last few years, bills such as SB-208 have been introduced in the Maryland Legislature that would destroy this rural legacy. There seems to be a sort of "ruling class" that has cropped up in the more urban communities that actually believe and insist that if folks are inconvenienced enough by forcing all non-immediate family members to appear before a Federal Firearms Licensed dealer and pay a fee to conduct a long-gun transaction, somehow murderous crime will cease.

These types of firearms are long guns used for sporting purposes and are rarely a preferred implement of career criminals due to the difficulty with concealment. The long-gun sportsmen all over this state and residents of rural western Maryland angrily regard this bill as an over-reaching infringement on the pursuit of their sport and recreation. We are sportsmen, not criminals. We are offended to be treated as such. Criminals, by the way, are highly unlikely to be affected by this legislation, but we surely will be. Again!

Lastly, and most unfortunately, this very restrictive legislation will most likely affect normal law-abiding citizens unwittingly into some type of loosely defined criminal activity via a technicality of law with serious penalties while they are merely trying to enjoy and share their sport. This proposed legislation is over-reaching, very unnecessary, and predictably will be ineffective.

Again, I strongly urge you to oppose SB-0208.

Respectfully,

Ben Kelkye

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