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*Written Testimony of Katie Novotny in Opposition of HB 302*

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February 5, 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 strongly oppose HB 302.

This bill would like to restrict behaviors at privately owned schools. These schools are often associated with a religion, many of which have been experiencing assaults. We have all heard the news reporting on various religious institutions receiving violent attacks. There is no reason for the State to restrict behaviors at these locations. Nor is it in anyone's best interest or safety to do so. If a private school would like to restrict firearm possession at their property, they are free to do so, as many privately owned businesses choose to do.

Many private schools rely on volunteers to provide security, as they do not have the protection of a School Resource Officer like public schools. Under this bill, only a HIRED security guard could have a firearm on the school property. Many of these private schools, particularly if they are small, do not have a budget for this. They rely on volunteers. Parents, grandparents, church members, etc. Why do we want to hamstring these schools? It is only a matter of time before one of these people who have attacked churches, choose a private school. This bill would leave those students and teachers defenseless.

Furthermore, gun free zones just do not work to prevent violence. Criminals, who by definition do not obey the law, simply ignore the gun free zone laws. They actually target these areas with greater frequency, because they know they will not face opposition. It doesn't take much research to see all the shootings that occur in gun free zones. The Gilroy Garlic festival; Dayton, Ohio; El Paso, Texas Wal-Mart; Aurora, Colorado. I could go on. Research compiled by the Crime Prevention Research Center in 2018 states that 94% of mass murders have been committed in gun free zones since 1950. <https://crimeresearch.org/2018/06/more-misleading-information-from-bloombergs-everytown-for-gun-safety-on-guns-analysis-of-recent-mass-shootings/>

Many parents choose private school for their children because they want less government involvement. This bill is overreaching the boundaries that should rightfully exist. I have heard of no public safety event or crisis that would warrant this bill even being submitted. It is simply an attempt to create more gun free zones by those who believe that the mere existence of firearms is a danger.

Please submit an unfavorable report on HB 302.

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