

MARYLAND JUDICIAL CONFERENCE
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Hon. Mary Ellen Barbera
Chief Judge

187 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, MD 21401

MEMORANDUM

TO: House Judiciary Committee
FROM: Legislative Committee
Suzanne D. Pelz, Esq.
410-260-1523
RE: House Bill 914
Gun Theft Felony Act of 2020
DATE: February 12, 2020
(3/4)
POSITION: Oppose

The Maryland Judiciary opposes House Bill 914. This legislation provides that a person convicted of theft of a firearm is guilty of a felony and subject to certain penalties. The court is prohibited from imposing less than or suspending any part of the mandatory minimum sentence of two years and for a second or subsequent conviction, five years. The sentence imposed must be separate from and consecutive to a sentence for any other offense.

The Judiciary traditionally opposes legislation that includes mandatory penalties. The Judiciary believes it is important for judges to weigh the facts and circumstances for each individual case when imposing a sentence. Provisions that place restrictions on the judge prevent the judge from considering legislative intent or factors unique to the case. Recognizing that lawmakers are responsible for enacting penalties for crimes, judges are mindful of various mitigating factors in crafting a sentence that most appropriately fits the individual defendant and the crime.

cc. Hon. Wendell Beitzel
Judicial Council
Legislative Committee
Kelley O'Connor