



State of Maryland
Department of State Police
Government Affairs Section
Annapolis Office (410) 260-6100

POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

DATE: February 3, 2021

BILL NUMBER: Senate Bill 599 **POSITION:** Letter of Information

BILL TITLE: Public Safety – Surplus Military Equipment - Prohibition on Purchase by Law Enforcement Agencies

This legislation seeks to prohibit a law enforcement agency from obtaining certain equipment from a federal military surplus program.

Under current law, the federal government has established a federal military surplus program. Under President Obama, there were restrictions put on what items could be made available to local law enforcement. President Trump did loosen those restrictions, but some of the items this bill seeks to restrict are already restricted.

Currently, a law enforcement agency cannot request a grenade launcher and firearms silencers which are also already illegal in Maryland. Some of the other items on the list in this bill are requested by law enforcement in order to protect lives and minimize the risk of injury to law enforcement or the public. For example, an armored vehicle can be extremely effective at removing innocent persons from harm's way in an active shooter situation. The agency requesting the vehicle also has no control over whether the vehicle is armored. Many of these vehicles provide rescue operations with additional access. In the case of a flood, these vehicles are used for access in deeper standing water to rescue and remove citizens, such as flooding in Ocean City. A drone can provide a viewpoint in a volatile or dangerous situation that otherwise would put a human being at risk. (The State Fire Marshal uses drones for building inspections after a fire).

The Department is the single point of contact for the surplus military equipment acquisition program. In addition to the restrictions included in the program, the Department reviews all requests for equipment. If the equipment is on the prohibited list, the request will not be submitted. The Department provides a link on its webpage for all surplus property distributed in Maryland.

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