
Written Testimony of Katie Novotny in Opposition of SB0479

February 08, 2021

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 oppose SB0479.

This bill changes the word “would” to “could”. “Could” is used to indicate possibility. “Could gain access”. We all know that kids can do all kinds of surprising things. The internet is a big wide world where all kinds of things can be learned. Things like how to pick a lock. A quick internet search of the terms “how to pick a lock” brings up pages and pages of results. Complete with pictures, videos, links to where to purchase the tools required, or simply a list of household items that could be used. There is a YouTube channel called LockPickingLawyer.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCm9K6rby98W8JigLoZO6h6FQ/featured> He is a lawyer who lives in Maryland and creates videos which evaluate security devices. This illustrates how easy it is to access information on how to pick locks, although he has a disclaimer stating to not use any of his information for illegal purposes. He shows how easily defeated with readily available items, locks actually are.

<https://youtu.be/o0IYq8AhMJc> This video shows how easily a gun lock box is picked with readily available tools. <https://youtu.be/Chu4mvEUc5I> This video shows a gun safe being opened with an orange juice bottle. Hundreds of videos are available, and it really is quite educational on what items to avoid purchasing. The rabbit hole that is YouTube aside, this information illustrates how easily locks are defeated, and how pointless legislation like this is. Nearly any adolescent child has access to the internet at some point, and therefore can obtain this kind of information. This is why changing the word “could” from “would” is such a terrible idea.

Changing the law to include access to unloaded firearms instead of loaded firearms is also a gross overstep. Unloaded firearms are no danger at all, except as a blunt object, similar to a brick, and much less dangerous than items available in most households; Kitchen knives, box cutters, saws, power tools, household chemicals, and prescription drugs.

Project ChildSafe (<https://projectchildsafe.org>) is a program created by the National Shooting Sports Foundation. They promote firearms safety and education. A huge project they have taken on is providing free gun safety kits. These include a cable lock to make a firearm unusable until it is removed. They have given out over 38 million gun locks. Under this proposed bill, these locks would not be adequate because simply having a gun unloaded and locked in a manner that it cannot be loaded and fired does not meet the impossible standards proposed by this legislation. These are free locks, available in every county of our state, securing firearms for people who believe they are safely securing their firearms from minors and complying with current laws. These people at the least will be forced to purchase some sort of safe, but as displayed above, certainly no inexpensive safe or lockbox is adequate against the word “could”.

This proposed law is a direct violation of DC v. Heller, which protects the right to have a firearm for self-defense in the home.

State law requires new handguns to leave the FFL with a lock. A list of approved locks is located here on the Maryland State Police website:

<https://mdsp.maryland.gov/Document%20Downloads/Approved%20Integrated%20Mechanical%20Safety%20Devices.pdf> These locks are also inadequate to meet the requirements of this law, although they were previously adequate.

As a firearms owner, I take responsibility for having my firearms stored safely. This protects my investment from damage caused by improper storage, as well as from theft. This bill, however is so hopelessly vague, that I don't know what is allowed. Historically, preventing a child from gaining ready access to a loaded firearm has been adequate.

This law allows prosecution of a firearms owner who thought they had properly secured their firearms in a manner considered generally reasonable by most people. However if a child does gain access, and does not even have to do anything with the firearm, if the police find out, under penalties in this bill, that person would then become a prohibited person. Over the possibility of a child coming in contact with an unloaded firearm.

There needs to be balance between public safety and rights. The current law does a fair job of treading that line. Unfortunately, sometimes things still happen. This bill is also unenforceable, unless the police are planning on going door to door to inspect storage devices. The only way anyone would likely know this law was violated was if the 3rd scenario happened, that a child does gain access and injures another or themselves. In that case, how is tacking on another meaningless sentence helping anyone heal from tragedy?

Because of these reasons above, I request an unfavorable report.

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