

Feb. 2021
Testimony RE: HB0175
Ammunition Sales and Transfers

Position: OPPOSE

HB0175 Is a pointless and unworkable bill to require NICS background checks (under federal law it is illegal to use an NICS check for anything other than a firearms purchase) and registration of ammunition sales. It will only result in encouraging buyer to drive to neighboring states to purchase ammunition and foster black market sales of ammunition. In 2013 FSA13 added layers of background checks to purchase a regulated firearm. Background checks more robust than an NICS check. Yet the firearm problem in Baltimore city and county has increased. "Regulated" firearms account for over 99% of shootings in Maryland. Long guns of any type are almost never used. No firearm recovered from a violent crime in Baltimore has been legally obtained. So if increasing the background checks on the actual firearm have not stemmed the violence, how can you expect a background check on ammunition to make any difference whatsoever. The scheme to "fingerprint" ammunition by keeping a fired shell casing from each pistol sold in Maryland so that a shell casing from a crime scene could be compared to the "collection" and thus identify and trace the firearm was after several years a dismal and expensive failure. In only one case was a correlation made, and that was a demonstration where the firearm had already been recovered so investigators knew which envelope held matching shell case. Please save the time and effort in pursuing this bill for more important, and practical issues

My suggestion, instead of focusing on doubling down with ever more restrictive firearms limitations, which obviously have not worked to look for a new approach. (Look at FSA13. Violent crime was on the decrease for many years prior to 2013 in Maryland. But almost immediately (within a year) POOF! Murders in Baltimore soared to historically high rates and have remained well over 300 annually and are on pace for the same in 2021 in spite of FSA 13 and the firearm control measures passed each subsequent year).

That new approach will include holding criminals responsible. Stop our revolving door justice system. Mandatory sentencing. The BPD has not recovered a single firearm used in a violent crime that legally obtained. Do this in conjunction with measures to return family values. To make parents take responsibility. Clean up the drug problem. The VAST majority of homicides in Maryland are drug related.

Establish firearms safety education in elementary school. The NRA "Eddie Eagle" program could be a model. Teach the children firearm safety, what to do if they find a firearm, and what not to do. A program that neither promotes firearms nor instills the unreasonable, almost hysterical fear so many people exhibit when faced with or discussing firearms, but one that imparts safe practices and demystifying knowledge at an age early enough to be effective.

Other measures with some impact: Tax credit, tax deduction, sales tax forgiveness for purchase of approved firearms safes (even though every firearms safe "could" be broken into, and therefore no firearms safe could not be approved under this law..see where I am going with this? Which course do you think will be more effective?

Please be responsible legislators. Do not just skim the surface, but look deeper. Find the root causes of whatever problems you are trying to solve. Decide on how you would measure effectiveness. Then craft a plan to achieve that. HINT: if it has not worked in the past, esp. when the problem we want to solve gets worse, maybe we are barking up the wrong tree.

I urge an unfavorable finding for this bill

Very Respectfully,
Gene Kohler, Capt, USN (Ret)
Annapolis