

House Judiciary Committee & Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Testimony of Omar A. Chung; law-abiding citizen and legal gun owner

Wednesday, March 3, 2020

HB 845 (Shall Issue) - Support

My name is Omar Chung and I was born and raised in Rochester, New York. I am a black and hard of hearing male who moved to Maryland in 2013 right after graduation from Rochester Institute of Technology for a job. I majored in Criminal Justice. I used to in a decent neighborhood though crimes happen daily in Silver Spring, Montgomery County, Maryland. I remembered an incident where there was a group of African American males broke into one apartment and shot two people. However, the police were all over and the apartment complex was shut down due to looking for the subjects to apprehend to be in custody. Another incident that I lost my bank of America debit card and a former friend found it, forced me to withdraw cash with false checks, I reported to the law enforcement and they did nothing afterward, however, the subject was not found. From that point, I was in fear of my life trying to figure how to defend myself. Unfortunately, law enforcement officials take about 20-30 minutes to arrive at the crime scene and the victim(s) may be harm badly.

Currently, I am working for the Department of Homeland Security as an unnamed position that has sensitive classified information in Baltimore, MD. I was fortunate that I was not impacted by the OPM breach however when I leave the workplace, I am at risk because I am black, gay, and hard of hearing. Regardless of what happened with the OPM breach, my personal information is at risk by hackers and the government who cannot protect their own? Recently, back in the fall of 2017, there was a leak from the credit company Equifax. I was one of 250 million people who were affected. My personal information is more damaged than it should be. Everyone knows where I live, my sister's birthday, my mother's social security number, and they are very defenseless when it comes to assailants who have their personal information to harm them during any time during the day.

My sister graduated from a school in Baltimore at Morgan State University and she does not have a firearm to defend herself due to in a bad neighborhood. I am concerned about her safety. I have my mother calling me asking me to make sure she is okay because she is only 26, soon 27 in April 2018. Since June 2018, I moved to Prince George's County area where the crime rate is high. My question is how can we protect ourselves if anyone can come to harm us at any second during the day? Self-defense means more people breathing, living, and protecting their community from harm. Having a firearm will save more lives from crooks in seconds than law enforcement officials trying to kill a subject in 20 minutes than saving a victim's life who may be dying from a gunshot wound.

When it comes to firearm training classes, I have to jump through hoops just to be

trained to carry a firearm legally. Most gun businesses refuse to provide a sign language interpreter due to financial burden. It puts my life and my fellow deaf and hard of hearing community at risk and can't protect ourselves from danger. I am currently in the process of becoming a certified firearm instructor for several years and it is preventing me to teach classes to the deaf/hard of hearing and hearing community due to my hearing loss and regulations to be certified. You have no idea how much risk we are faced when we are inside or outside of the workplace. I am a member of the NRA and MSI and I have to follow the NRA guidelines to obtain my certification.

I used to be a security officer for a government contractor and I was supposed to be trained on carrying a firearm for work and apparently, my superiors said no due to my hearing loss. That is discrimination. I have to go through a lot of special circumstances just to meet the requirement. I refuse to spend thousands of dollars just to be a certified instructor for the state of Maryland to teach and conceal carry legally. It does get very tiring to advocate for myself that faces two stereotypes at the political level.

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, it was signed into law more than 25 years ago and it doesn't stop the gun business from not providing equal access to training to be a certified firearm instructor or to conceal carry. Like I mentioned about the threats and harm that I receive, I should not spend hundreds of dollars to defend myself in the state of Maryland. If Maryland becomes shall issue, there will be less crime like in our neighboring states, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Virginia, and West Virginia. I have an issue with the good and substantial reason that is defined by the state of Maryland because the term self-defense is not good enough.

Law enforcement officials need to be accountable if they cannot save specific incidents in a timely fashion. If I am denied a permit to conceal carry because I do not provide enough materials to prove that I am in extreme harm. When I reported my incidents to law enforcement back in 2013 and 2014, I never got one single police report and I called numerous times. I was threatened and harmed in every way possible. I even contacted my elected officials and they did nothing. Just think about your loved ones leaving earth very soon because they did nothing to harm the subjects. I will be treated like a criminal by politicians and law enforcement due to the color of my skin regardless of I have no criminal history and follow the law in every aspect. To point it out there, some of those horrendous, traumatizing experiences that I mentioned earlier are real, not fictional. I strongly encourage you to support HB 845 law-abiding citizens like me who have a very difficult time obtaining a conceal carry permit legally. If you do not support those two bills, your fate will be determined during the 2022 primary election. If you have any questions or concerns about the bill HB 845, don't hesitate to contact me at one of my communication method(s) below. Thank you for taking the time from your busy schedule to read this and thank you for your service to the State of Maryland.

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