

Dmitry Slavnikov, resident of Carroll County, Maryland

Testimony regarding HB0200 (SB479)

Respected Chairperson and Delegates,

While I commend the Assembly's intent to protect children by more strongly asserting the responsibility of firearm owners to prevent minors' unsupervised access to guns, the change in language proposed by House Bill 200 (Senate Bill 479) is dangerously vague and would place law-abiding Marylanders at the mercy of the personal opinions of law enforcement.

It is fair to say that a seventeen-year-old with an arc-welder *could* gain access to a firearm locked in a steel safe or that a fourteen-year-old breaking into an otherwise child-free apartment *could* get hold of a hidden hunting rifle, but I will not stipulate that the proposed change in language is a round-about way for the General Assembly to find an excuse to arrest and prosecute every gun owner in the state of Maryland. Rather, the wording of the bill appears to attempt to allow more leeway to judges and prosecutors to punish truly irresponsible individuals who, otherwise, could escape justice under the looser "*would*" standard in the current regulation.

However, though a discerning law enforcement or court officer likely *would* choose to use his or her better judgement to not go after an individual whose safe was broken into by a burglar-minor with an arc welder – something most citizens would see as wholly unreasonable – the proposed change to the law would make it so that an ill-intentioned officer *could*. I was not born in this country, but I know that it is not the American way to rely on the good graces of people in power, but that it is rather to explicitly protect every citizen from even the potential of predation and persecution by ones empowered as civil servants. To pass this bill would go against this maxim of American jurisprudence, eroding Marylanders' freedoms, and stepping away from our Nation of Laws towards a nation of men.

Therefore, I respectfully implore the Maryland General Assembly to reject the changes proposed by House Bill 200 (Senate Bill 479).