



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

POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

DATE: March 30, 2022

BILL NUMBER: Senate Bill 861 **Position:** Letter of Information

BILL TITLE: Public Safety – Firearm Crimes – Enforcement Center, Offenses, and Procedures

REVIEW AND ANALYSIS:

This legislation seeks to establish the Maryland State Police Gun Center within the Department of State Police (DSP). The Center will be a statewide firearms enforcement center for the tracking, screening and vetting of all firearms crimes committed in the State. This legislation also requires each law enforcement agency in the state to report certain information to the Center involving crime firearms.

The Maryland Gun Center exists today as a unit within the DSP. Created by the DSP for the purposes of tracking, screening, and vetting firearms crimes reported to the Center by all law enforcement agencies. The Center works in partnership with law enforcement officers and state's attorneys on any request relating to firearms. The Center performs a number of background checks on the person and the firearm when the request for information is presented. They work with law enforcement officers to help determine if the person is prohibited and what, if any, charges should be placed relating to the firearm. However, reporting information or calling the Center is not mandatory.

The Center acts as a voluntary resource for all law enforcement agencies investigating crimes involving firearms or encounters with citizens where firearms are present. As of February 18, 2022, the center is staffed with 3 sworn and 4 contractual civilian employees. In 2021, the Center handled 9,902 calls for service. In 2020, they handled 11,434 and in 2019, over 10,500. Most calls for service to the Gun Center include:

1. Live arrests from officers on the street,
2. Search Warrants with multiple suspects and firearms,
3. Weapon returns for all agencies,
4. Handgun Qualification License disapprovals,
5. Firearm Registration Unit disapproval
6. MAFSS system checks for Emergency Petitions and ERPO's

The Center was established as a great resource and was designed to perform the very functions mandated in the legislation. The Center is not able to take on the additional cases mandated in the legislation. Any effort to expand the services provided by the Center will require additional resources for the program to be a success, i.e. personnel and equipment.