



# HARFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

COURAGE HONOR INTEGRITY

## Senate Bill 1 – Oppose

Criminal Law - Wearing, Carrying, or Transporting Firearms - Restrictions

### Letter of Opposition to the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

February 7, 2023

---

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I write today to oppose Senate Bill 1 as an overreaching and unconstitutional impediment on the rights of law-abiding citizens who went through the process and legally obtained a wear and carry permit in the State of Maryland.

As the elected Sheriff of Harford County with over 38 years of experience in law enforcement and public safety, I believe it is the right of all law-abiding citizens to own firearms and to be permitted to follow the legal process to obtain a wear and carry permit for their personal protection.

This legislation, as drafted, would make it nearly impossible for law abiding citizens to exercise their legal right to carry a firearm in most urban and densely populated suburban areas in the State of Maryland. This legislation would make it illegal in public areas, like malls, restaurants, and other retail establishments, for law abiding citizens to carry a firearm for protection.

We have seen time and time again that a law-abiding citizen, who is legally carrying a firearm, have prevented many criminals from carrying out acts that would have killed and injured many innocent victims. What we have not seen are law-abiding citizens who have gone through the process to legally obtain a wear and carry permit committing crimes and killing or injuring innocent Marylander's.

Looking at the ten years since the last "Maryland Gun Safety Act" became law, we need only look at homicides in Baltimore City, which continue to increase going from a low of 197 in 2011 to an average of 340 a year for each of the last five years, to see legislation targeting firearms and citizens who legally possess them,



are having no effect on the violence, shootings and murders that are continuing to increase.

These “gun safety” measures have had no effect addressing the problem of crimes committed with firearms in our state, yet we are here again this year looking to say we are “Addressing the Problem”, however data and facts clearly show this approach did not work 10 years ago and it will do nothing to stop the steady increases in homicides and non-fatal shootings that are increasing, not only in Baltimore city, but throughout the State of Maryland.

It's clear that the goal of this legislation is to circumvent the supreme court decision (New York State Rifle and Pistol Assn VS Buer) which affirmed constitutional rights for Law Abiding citizens and said “the Government cannot prohibit the carrying of firearms in public for self-defense” and individual’s do not need a “good and substantial” reason to carry. In this day and age, where the General Assembly has chosen to make criminals the victims, do nothing to address the violence and murders that are out of control in our urban areas and pass laws making it more difficult for police to protect and serve our community, it’s imperative that Marylanders’ Constitutional right to protect themselves not be taken away or infringe upon further.

I urge the members of the committee to issue an unfavorable report on SB 1.

Sincerely,

Sheriff Jeffrey R. Gahler