

Date of Hearing: 2/07/2023

TESTIMONY ON SB0001 - POSITION: UNFAVORABLE

Criminal Law - Wearing, Carrying, or Transporting Firearms - Restrictions (Gun Safety Act of 2023)

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Matthew Masciochi

OPENING: My name is Matthew. I am a resident of District 14. I am submitting this testimony against SB0001, the Gun Safety Act of 2023.

I should state up front that I am a lifelong Democrat. Issues related to firearms can fall along party lines and I wanted to make it clear that this is not one of those situations. I also want to mention that I hold a degree in psychology and have an academic background in criminology and statistics, which I draw on in consideration of judiciary matters.

My first reason for opposing SB0001 is that there is no evidence this bill would have any effect at reducing violent crime. Information I've compiled from national crime statistics as well as reading specific criminal cases suggest that laws restricting the transportation of weapons are almost always ignored by criminals intending to commit acts of violence, meaning there is no deterrent effect. As an example, MD Criminal Law 4-203 already makes it illegal to carry handguns on one's person, and yet armed robberies and homicides with handguns remain commonplace in the state. As a converse example, the state of Vermont has almost no restriction on carrying or transporting firearms, and yet despite having a population larger than the city of Baltimore, has between 8 to 17 homicides per year (2011-2021), only a third of which involved firearms. Baltimore, by comparison, had *24 times* that many homicides in the same time period. From this data, it should be clear that there is no connection between permissiveness of firearm transportation and rate of homicide.

Instead, laws with provisions like SB0001 only burden citizens like myself who have no ill intent towards other people, and are just trying to engage in lawful behavior such as target shooting, hunting, commerce, maintenance, and self-preservation.

That last part leads to my second reason for opposing this bill: Besides its lack of exemption for law enforcement and security personnel, SB0001 also lacks an exemption for citizens that have permits to carry firearms for personal protection. I myself have one of these permits, which was not easy to obtain, and my reason for getting one is having been the victim of violence and threats on my life, as well as acts of violence in my community that I feel give me reasonable fear for my safety. In my many years living in District 14, I have been assaulted several times in public by individuals on the basis of my apparent race or religion, as well as persons suffering a mental health crisis that turned violent. In my local community over the past few years, there have been numerous instances of hate/bias-motivated violence, and individuals with mental illness physically assaulting people, often with deadly weapons like knives or chunks of cement. As an example, one of my neighbors was murdered walking home from work by a local man who suffered from psychosis. And just two weeks ago in my town, someone driving a van tried to abduct a woman during the early evening; as of this writing, the perpetrator is still at large.

All of these acts of violence had a few things in common. First, they happened too fast for police to be summoned in a reasonable time, but were prevented by the victim being armed, or could have been. Second, they occurred in publicly-accessible property owned by others, in places where people congregate. Third, the victims were completely innocent, having done nothing that would have provoked an attack.

In closing, if you pass this bill, it will only burden law-abiding citizens. It will functionally make myself and the thousands of others like me unable to carry our defensive firearms in the places where we are most likely to be assaulted, while doing nothing to prevent such assaults from happening. While there is clearly a problem to be solved, the solution lies somewhere else besides making more firearm restrictions.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Matthew Masciocchi