



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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SB 159

DATE: February 7, 2023

SPONSOR: Senator Hettleman

ASSIGNED TO: Judicial Proceedings

CONTACT PERSON: Kathleen Boucher (Kathleen.boucher@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: Support

Firearms – Maryland Voluntary Do Not Sell Firearm Registry – Establishment

This bill requires the State Police to establish a Maryland Voluntary Do Not Sell Firearm Registry. It establishes an application process for individuals who would like to voluntarily place their names on the Registry and removal process for individuals who would like to take their names off the Registry. The bill prohibits the sale or transfer of a firearm to an individual whose name is on the Registry. The bill is intended to be a suicide prevention measure that allows an individual with mental health challenges to voluntarily choose to be placed on the Registry at a point in the individual's life when she/he is clearheaded to protect the individual from moments of psychological crisis when she/he is at risk of suicide. Although an individual can request to be taken off the Registry at any time, the bill creates a mandatory waiting period of 21 days before the name will be removed.

The County supports this bill as a tool to help address mental health concerns by allowing individuals to opt out of firearms ownership if they have a history of mental health issues. Advocacy groups can cite numerous statistics regarding the overwhelming number of suicides and failed suicide attempts that involve firearms. However, the experience of vulnerable individuals goes to the heart of the matter. In an opinion piece published in *The Washington Post* last summer, one individual described how this bill might help him: "I have mental clarity most of the time, but I know storms will come again. I want to have the ability to preempt crises. I want to have the ability to protect myself from the version of me that is not thinking clearly."¹

¹ Bryan Barks, *The Washington Post*, August 20, 2022.