

“Opposition to SB-0001”

As I drive around Annapolis, I’ve noticed a lot of construction to our state roads and buildings. I’m no expert in major construction, but I’m sure a lot of studies went into the design and safety of the desired finished product. I’m confident that these studies took months and possibly years of data collection and public input to support the changes that were needed. If there was a dangerous stretch of any state or local road that led to an increase in accidents or fatalities, numerous traffic studies would be completed in an effort to find the root cause of the unsafe conditions. This data would then be used to formulate and justify the new safety measures required and what laws would be needed to minimize future accidents.

My question for the General Assembly, “What studies or surveys were conducted to support the need for SB-0001, The Gun Safety Act of 2023?” If the goal of the bill is to make things safer for Maryland residents, is there overwhelming evidence that such a bill is needed? A major aspect of this bill is to prohibit legal gun owners with legal concealed carry permits, who were thoroughly vetted by the Maryland State Police, from exercising their Constitutional rights in public places. Do we have police records that reflect violent crimes have been committed by legal concealed weapon carriers? Since the results of the Supreme Court Case “*New York State Rifle and Pistol Association v. Bruen*”, have police records shown irresponsible or reckless behavior from legal gun owners in public places, between July 2022 and January 2023? To my knowledge, there have been no ‘wild, wild, west situations’ that were feared when former Governor Hogan complied with the Supreme Court decision and lifted the state restrictions on concealed carry permits. I’m not able to read all public reports from all county police departments, but I’ve kept an eye on the Anne Arundel County reports. To date, I’m aware of one concealed carry incident at the Westfield Mall of Annapolis in October of 2022. Two armed men attempted to carjack a shopper, as per the police report, (quote) “A man was getting into his SUV when two men armed with handguns approached. The victim drew a legally owned, legally possessed and licensed handgun to defend himself. The assailants fired three shots, but the victim was not struck. The victim, who is licensed to carry a handgun, did not fire his weapon. The suspects fled in a silver sedan.” (end quote) Here is a situation where the licensed, legal gun owner never fired his weapon, yet he survived and kept himself safe and possibly alive. Nearly all other police reports that involve gun violence are indicative of suspects who aren’t legal gun owners nor have legal carry permits. Criminals don’t follow our existing laws. They aren’t fingerprinted, undergo extensive background checks, complete the seven-day waiting period, or attend required firearm safety classes. Everywhere around the country, including Maryland, those who support gun control always call for ‘background checks, fingerprints, waiting periods, and safety training’. Here in Maryland, those exact requirements are completed before anyone can get their HQL and wear and carry permits. Our State Senator, Mr. Waldstreicher, who authored this bill, was quoted by Jennifer Gable of the Capital News Service dated January 31st, as saying (quote) “The Bruen decision gets rid of Maryland’s ‘good and substantial’ requirements in order to own and possess a handgun, by eliminating that requirement, now anyone can get a gun and bring it anywhere. That is unacceptable and creates a tremendous danger in our state.” (end quote). This statement is false. Can anyone get a gun and bring it anywhere? No, not legally. All HQL requirements have to be met prior to

purchase, rent, or receipt of a handgun (As of 01 OCT 2013). The HQL process is led by our own Maryland State Police (MSP). To say MSP are giving out HQLs and carry permits without meeting the letter of the law is a false reflection of the laws they are sworn to uphold.

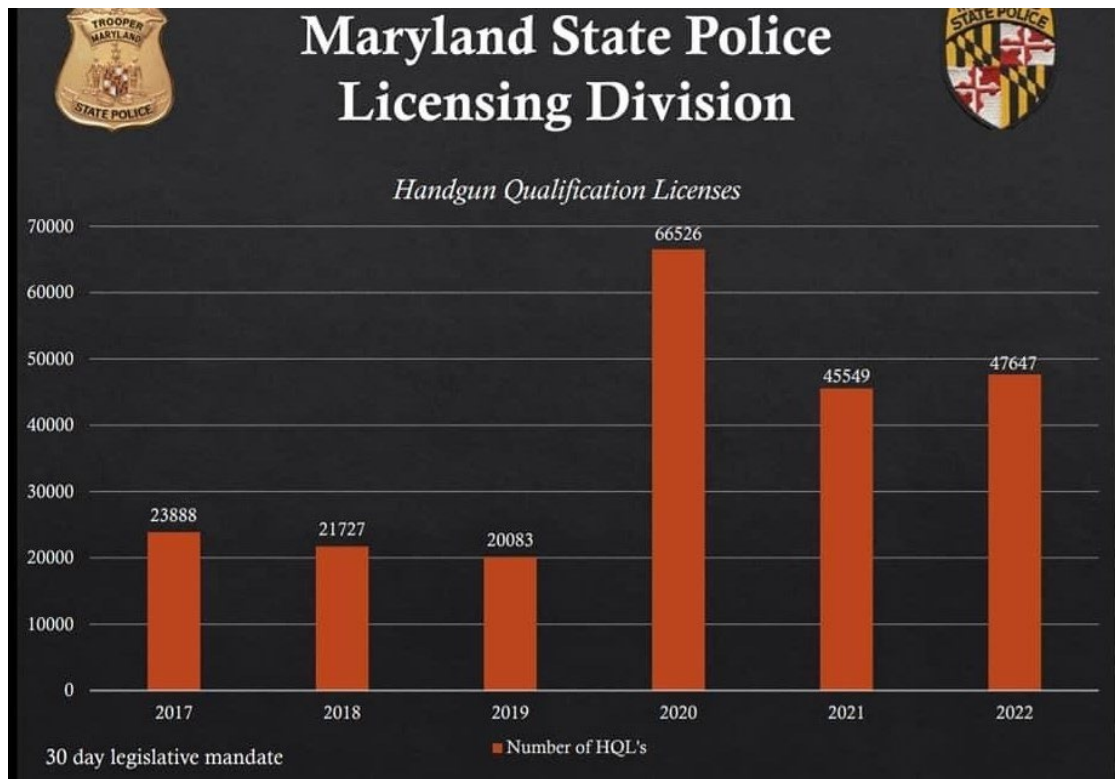
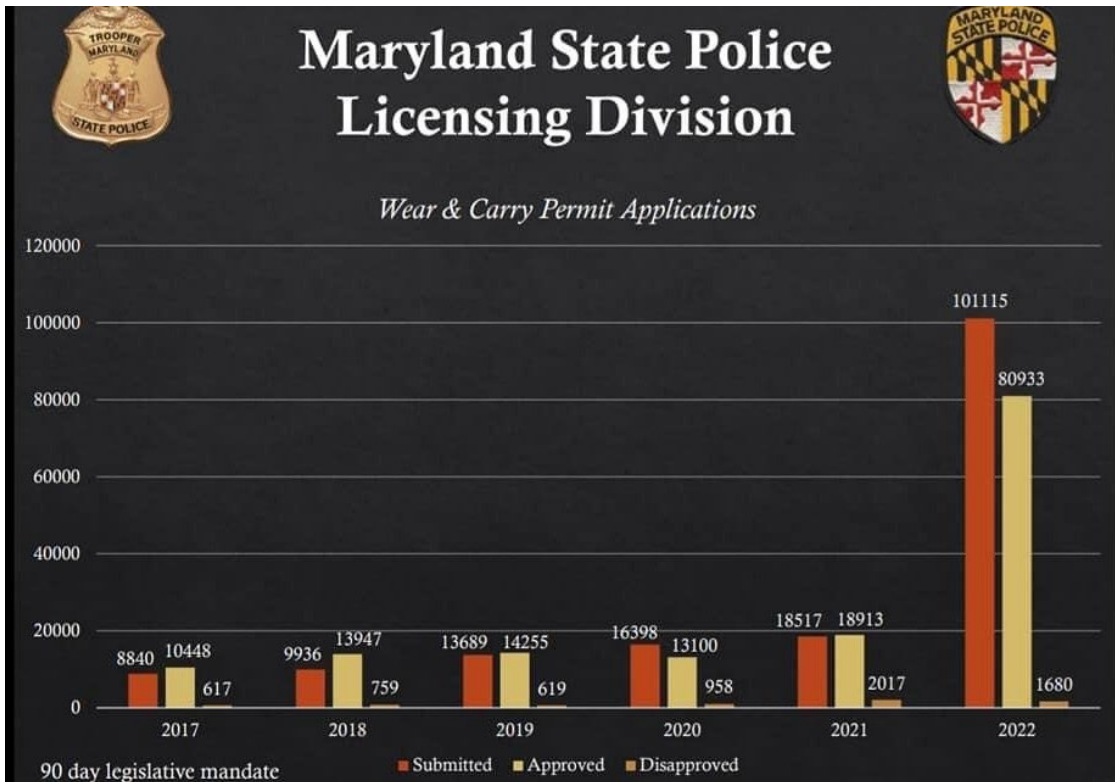
As per MSP records, between June 2022 and December 2022, more than 80,000 permits have been approved across the state. There are now more legal gun owners and concealed carry permit holders than any other time in state history. Most people are unaware of who is carrying concealed and that's the point. They can be at the mall, a restaurant, the movies, or any other public accommodation. Are they causing havoc or mayhem? No. Do we see wild, wild, west situations in our cities? No. If gun carrying criminals know that armed citizens and/or police officers are present in an area, will they reconsider their attack? Will they think twice before attacking a food court, if there's high probability of armed citizens present?

As written, SB-0001, will provide a roadmap for criminals to know that legal gun owners are not armed in the areas they wish to exploit. They will know they have the average 9-1-1 response time to commit their heinous acts and flee the scene. Why would we have laws that benefit criminals? Nothing in SB-0001 prevents crime, it only prevents legal gun owners from protecting themselves and others in public places. This bill is reactive in nature as it gives lawyers additional charges to levy after a crime has been committed and suspects are charged. It does nothing on the front end to curtail crime. If this bill is to reduce criminal action, then an exemption for legal, concealed carry permit holders must be written into the bill. Otherwise, this bill appears to target legal gun owners who have completed their required background checks and training and were cleared by the Maryland State Police. Do we want to thumb our noses at the Maryland State Police? Does this bill imply their diligent work can't be trusted?

I was recently asked, "why do you feel the need to conceal carry everywhere you go?" My response is simple, "to protect myself, my family, and others from those who have no respect for human life. And yes, the others that I will protect could be the same residents who don't like guns and feel that my gun should be kept at home."

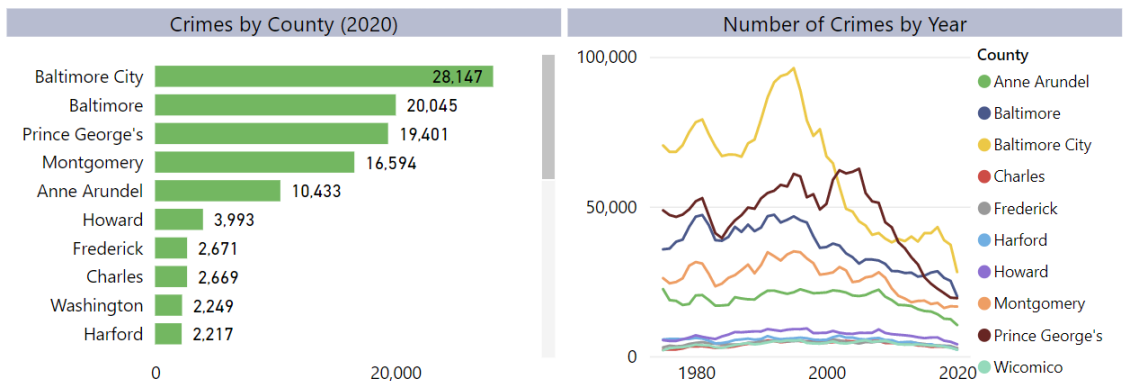
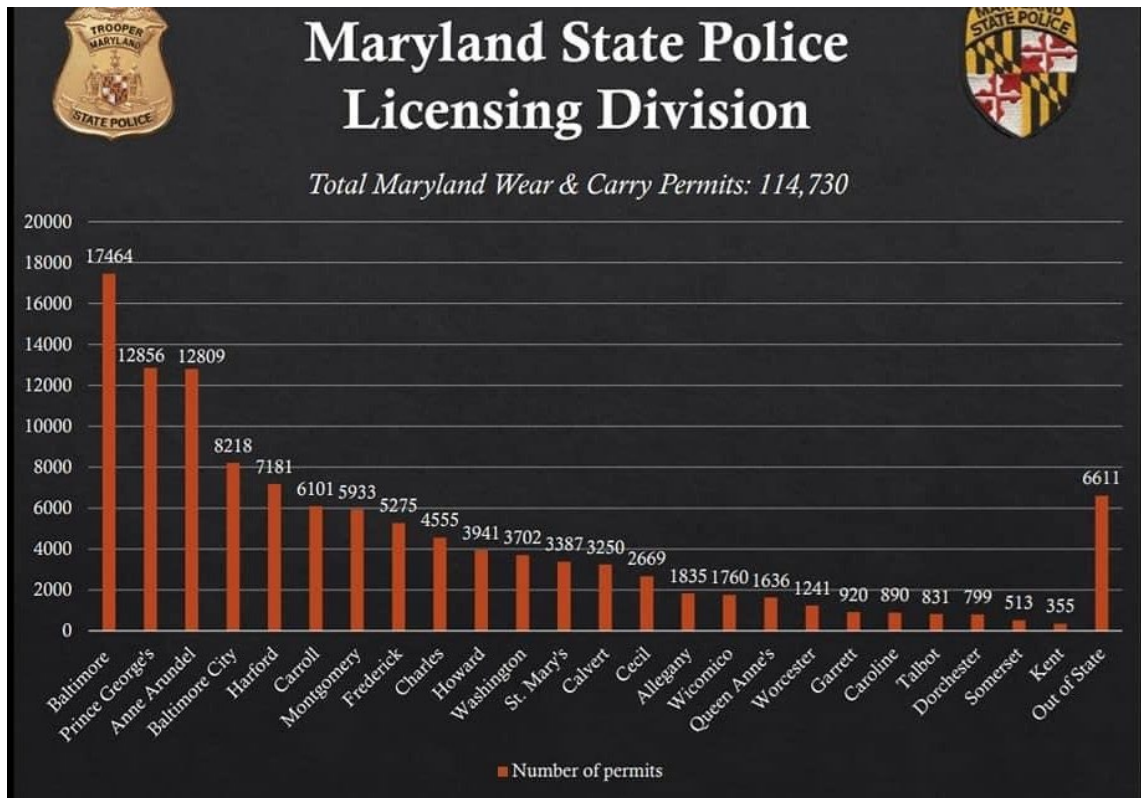
This bill, SB-0001, essentially tells us we can only possess our firearms while at home. The last time I read the Constitution, our rights don't end at our property lines. They are meant to exist in the public domain. Does the First Amendment only apply when we're at home? Does our Constitutional protection against unlawful search and seizure not exist while walking the public streets of Maryland? This new bill implies that you forfeit your Constitutional Rights at your doorstep. As a proud American, veteran, and resident of this state, I take my rights seriously and I hope everyone else does, too. If one right is permitted to be watered-down or taken away, it's only a matter of time until others will follow.

Maryland State Police statics show that our residents want to exercise their Second Amendment Rights that have been restored to them. In 2022, the MSP had successfully disapproved nearly 1700 applications due to failed background checks or other parameters. Gun control advocates should applaud the work of the MSP as they work tirelessly to keep our state and residents safe.



Looking at county-by-county crime for 2020 and comparing the wear & carry permits issued, our Maryland residents can clearly justify the need for personal protection. However, as

reported in the SCOTUS decision, we shouldn't have to justify the need to exercise a Constitutional Right that already exists.



Ref: <http://goccp.maryland.gov/crime-statistics/>

Thank you for this time to address the General Assembly. Healthy, meaningful debate that is backed by facts and statistics, will help our state and our country grow stronger.

Sincerely,
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