

Testimony of Art Novotny In OPPOSITION to SB001
(Gun Safety Act of 2023)

I have been involved with firearms for essentially my entire life. I am a certified Range Safety Officer and both compete in and run a variety of competitive shooting events. I also help out with firearm safety training. Like thousands of other Marylanders, I also went through the training and expense to purchase a Wear and Carry permit.

In a way, I am very fortunate that I did not qualify for a permit under the old “Good and Substantial Reason” guidelines. I lived in a safe neighborhood, never made any enemies nor enough money for Maryland to consider my life worth protecting. Once the Supreme Court decision removed the gatekeeper of “Good and Substantial Reason” to make personal protection available to regular folks like me, I applied for my permit. I took the mandated 16 hour training course and aced the live fire qualification. I paid the for the application fee and yet another set of finger prints. Naturally I passed the background check...I don't break the law.

I went through that hassle and expense (which I know I was fortunate to afford) because there has been noticeably more police activity in my “safe neighborhood.” Another consideration was my trips to the shooting range. We've all heard stories about armed robbers staking out shooting ranges and following people home from them. They either follow them all the way home and do...whatever unspeakable things they want to the victim and family, or “bump” them in a minor traffic accident. When the good guy stops to exchange insurance information, he gets robbed. Sure, he has a lot of guns, but they are all secured, unloaded, and useless...because he is a good guy and follows the law. The bad guy doesn't care. He has his illegal gun loaded and ready to go...and now he has a whole lot more of them.

I just did not want that to be me. In addition the safety of myself and my family, part of responsible firearm ownership is keeping them out of the wrong hands.

This law as written would make all of that moot. Not only could I not carry my personal defense firearm (despite all the time, money and resources invested in earning that “right,” I couldn't even legally transport any of my firearms (locked up and unloaded) to the range...or anywhere. I wouldn't be able to get very far on the road without passing within 100 feet of a “place of public accommodation.” Even the gun range itself is a “place of public accommodation,” where firearm possession would be illegal. Yup, irrelevant to a wear and carry permit, I couldn't even have a gun at a gun range! There could be no shooting sports, training, or hunting off of one's own property if this bill were to pass. It looks like even the police would also have to leave their guns at home.

I guess I should be thankful that my house is more than 100 feet from a gas station or other “place of public accommodation,” so at least I can keep my firearms in my own house. I'm sure

there are others who aren't so fortunate. What are they going to do before this law gets overturned?

What about the good people who were not blessed with the fortunate life I have lived so far? Those whose lives were in peril and who qualified with the previous "good and substantial reason," have now had that needed protection stripped away from them.

Finally, what about the folks who have been carrying illegally this whole time? Those who have not been through the background checks, training, fingerprinting and fees who carry guns to rob and kill good people like me? Are they going to stop, just because they are within 100 feet of a "place of public accommodation?" Who is going to tell them that? Who is going to stop them?

Please return an unfavorable report on this bill.

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