

# WESTERN MARYLAND SPORTSMEN'S COALITION, INC.

Garrett Allegany Washington Frederick Carroll

February 6, 2023

Honorable Members of the  
Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Md. 21401

**Subject: SB -0001 Wearing, Carrying, or Transporting Firearms- Restrictions  
(Gun Safety Act of 2023) OPPOSE**

Dear Honorable Senators:

My name is Ben Kelkye and I currently hold the office of President of the Western Maryland Sportsmen's Coalition, Inc. (WMSC) The Coalition is an organization that consists of nearly twenty-six thousand individual members of many sportsmen's clubs of the five western Maryland counties of Garrett, Allegany, Washington, Frederick, and Carroll. We meet regularly with authorized representatives of our members' sporting clubs, their designated county representatives and members of other associations & organizations affiliated with our sport.

Briefly stated, our mission is to provide recognition and publicity for area sportsmen and conservation clubs engaged in wildlife management and/or the preservation of land, water, and open space resources and to provide a forum in which each member organization may present and discuss its local memberships' views on such issues.

We strive to promote and protect the right of every law-abiding citizen to keep and bear arms and ammunition for self-defense and for all other lawful purposes, especially shooting sports, and to provide the sportsmen and conservationists of Western Maryland an opportunity to present a united and more effective voice in matters relating to the environment and fish and game management.

According to the National Fish & Wildlife Service and our own Department of Natural Resources there are more than 119,000 licensed hunters in our state that spend approximately \$240 million per year in hunting related activities that mainly utilize sporting long-guns. Of that \$240 million, about \$120 million is spent on a nearly endless list of related gear and hardware such as optics, clothing, ammunition, and the like. In addition, many thousands of other folks utilize shotguns and rifles in both competitive and/or recreational shooting events such as still targets, trap, skeet, and sporting clays. These folks spend millions of dollars more each year in their individual pursuits.

Every year thousands of hunters, competitive and recreational shooters travel all over the State of Maryland to engage in their sport. Many more hunters and recreational shooters from other states come to Maryland to participate in our bountiful big game and waterfowl hunting opportunities. Millions of additional dollars are spent on travel, lodging and in eating establishments in the many small, local community businesses in the rural Maryland counties of Western Maryland as well as the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

Senate Bill 0001 as written, will essentially prohibit any of these sportsmen and women from traveling any distance in our state that would require refueling their vehicle, stopping for a quick lunch or dinner while on the road, or even staying in a motel or hotel while they have a firearm in their possession. Even parking a vehicle in the parking lot of an establishment with a cased shotgun will be prohibited. The financial implications of this proposed legislation could be devastating to our Western Maryland counties that depend heavily on hunting season revenue.

Sportsmen all over this state and residents of rural western Maryland angrily regard this bill as an over-reaching infringement on the pursuit of their sport and recreation. We are sportsmen, not criminals, and we are offended to be treated as such. Criminals, by the way, are highly unlikely to be affected by this legislation, but we surely will be. Again!

Lastly, and most unfortunately, this very restrictive legislation will most likely affect normal law-abiding citizens unwittingly into some type of loosely defined criminal activity via a technicality of law with serious penalties while they are merely trying to enjoy and share their sport. This proposed legislation is over-reaching, very unnecessary, and predictably will be ineffective.

I, as a private citizen of this State, together with the thousands of club members that are the heart of the Western Maryland Sportsmen's Coalition, Inc. **strongly urge you to oppose SB-0001**, Titled: **Wearing, Carrying, or Transporting Firearms- Restrictions (Gun Safety Act of 2023)**.

Respectfully,

*Ben Kelkye*

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Signed: Joe Winter, President, Washington County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs  
Jerry Zembower, President, Allegany & Garrett County Sportsmen's Association  
Matt Guilfoyle, President, Carroll County Sportsmen's Association