

SB 1: Criminal Law – Wearing, Carrying, or Transporting Firearms – Restrictions  
(Gun Safety Act of 2023)

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Position: OPPOSE

*SB1 affects me personally – why don't you trust me?* It bans numerous places in Maryland from legal carry of concealed firearms for personal protection by citizens with Maryland State Police-issued Wear and Carry Permits. These citizens have passed in-depth background checks, have been fingerprinted and have undergone at least 16 hours of training and a live-fire test. They represent one of, if not the most, law-abiding groups of citizens in Maryland.

I've owned guns for over 60 years, and I have been hunting and participating in shooting sports since I received my first gun and NRA-sanctioned safety and sharpshooting training when I was 12-years-old. My dad took me because "the best time to learn gun safety is when you are a kid." I have voluntarily taken and been required to take numerous firearm safety and shooting skills training during my life. There are many like me. As a responsible and serious Wear & Carry Permit holder, I ask: "*Why don't you trust me?*" I've lived a lawful life and jumped through all the bureaucratic hoops – "*why should I trust or have faith in you my Legislators ... in my government ... if you don't have faith in or trust me?*" It goes both ways.

SB1 is not aimed at preventing or punishing those that commit crimes with firearms, but rather is directed at Wear & Carry Permit holders who would receive stiff fines for unknowingly venturing into a verboten area while legally carrying. It is not the trained and responsible Wear & Carry Permit holders that are a danger in these locations.

Under SB 1 provisions, should a Wear & Carry Permit holder inadvertently forget one's permit at home, heaven forbid, or unknowingly misplace it, they would receive a stiff monetary fine. Should it happen a second time, they could have their Wear & Carry Permit rescinded by the MSP (loss of a constitutional right). Why do you want to punish good, law-abiding Marylanders so harshly?

Laws such as HB1 will not control the way people behave, they just define behavior that the state deems unwanted. By restricting responsible Marylander's ability to defend themselves in these banned areas, you would be ceding control to those individuals that don't obey the law. These banned areas, that include restaurants and hotels that serve alcohol (whether I am drinking alcohol or not) become just more 'Gun-Free Zones' that criminals seek out. Criminals like to attack defenseless victims, and they are attracted to gun-free zones. The proposed banned places have no historical precedent as stated in the U.S. Supreme Court's 'Bruen' decision and are therefore unconstitutional restrictions on the rights of Marylanders.

As if these aforementioned provisions aren't onerous enough, must I now ask permission from those in my community, even those that simply find inanimate guns 'yucky,' if they will allow me on their property? This would render the concealed part of carrying null and void. Must one first ask permission to carry when they enter someone's home while taking a survey, delivering food, helping a troubled relative or neighbor in need? Criminals or non-permit holders would not be fined for not asking permission, but I would? How do you enforce this provision? Must a person first ask permission to exercise their First Amendment right to free speech or expression - or any other guaranteed right set forth in the Bill of Rights? Of course not.

Despite some good work to make SB1 less onerous, which I applaud, HB1 is a knee-jerk over-reaction to the 'Bruen' decision, a decision which set forth the requirements for states to restrict the location of concealed carry of firearms to those places with a historical analog, i.e., in place pre-1800's. Like other laws passed in single-party rule states post-'Bruen,' SB1 remains an overreach and will not pass judicial muster.