

UNF SB0001

March 27, 2023

Dear House Judiciary Committee Members,

I am providing this written testimony to request that you vote NO for SB0001 Criminal Law-Prohibitions on Wearing, Carrying or Transporting Firearms (Gun Safety Act of 2023). This bill would almost eliminate the ability of law-abiding Maryland citizens to defend themselves in a life threatening situation.

I am a life-long resident of the state of Maryland. I have been a law-abiding gun owner for several years, and I have recently obtained a Maryland Wear and Carry Permit, a Pennsylvania License to Carry Firearms, and a West Virginia Nonresident Concealed Pistol/Revolver License. I have completed every required training course, passed a live fire practical, and have been fingerprinted and background checked in order to own and carry a firearm. In addition to meeting these extensive requirements required by the state of Maryland, I have taken multiple safety courses, and have many hours of live fire range training. I am a member of the Armed Women of America group that meets monthly in Hagerstown Maryland to continue my training and education.

I have made the significant investment of time and money into this training so I can defend my life, if I am ever required to do so. I am a dog owner who enjoys walking my pet on leash. My dog has been attacked by unleashed, bigger dogs on several occasions. Until I had the ability to legally carry a firearm, I had nothing to defend myself with other than pepper spray, which has limited effectiveness. These attacks made me realize that as a small female, I would not be able to defend myself from any man who wished to harm me. It is hard to admit, but even the smallest male could easily overpower me. This would leave me at a serious disadvantage if I needed to defend myself. My ability to carry a firearm levels the playing field, and would give me a chance to escape a much larger, stronger assailant.

We are all saddened and outraged by gun violence perpetrated by criminals with no regard for existing laws or human life. They think nothing of going into public spaces and committing horrific acts of violence against innocent, unarmed people. I have been similarly outraged by acts of domestic violence, and too many women have lost their lives at the hands of someone who should love and protect them. Victims of these types of crimes have my deepest compassion and sympathy. However, I do not want to become the next victim at the mercy of the men who are around me. Any woman who wants the ability to defend herself with a firearm from such violence should be able to do so. This has to extend to being able to carry a firearm in public spaces, where many of these types of attacks are committed. Women should not have to rely on bystanders or the police for defense when in public places. We must be able to be our own self protectors.

I urge you to vote NO on this bill.

Best Regards,

Julie Hixon

Hagerstown, MD