



Testimony in **Support** of

Criminal Law - Wearing, Carrying, or Transporting Firearms - Restrictions (Gun Safety Act of 2023)

SB1

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Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence

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Dear Chair Clippinger, Vice-Chair Moon, and distinguished members of the Committee,

Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence (MPGV) is a statewide organization dedicated to reducing gun deaths and injuries throughout the state of Maryland. We urge the committee for a **FAVORABLE** report on Senate Bill 1 which seeks to respond to the recent Supreme Court decision impacting the process of Maryland's firearm wear and carry permitting system.

In June of 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a decision in *New York State Rifle & Pistol Ass. v. Bruen* which directly addressed the constitutionality of what was frequently referred to as "May Carry" permitting processes. Essentially, within "May Carry" jurisdictions, states could choose to grant individuals a permit allowing them to carry a firearm in public. In the *Bruen* decision, the Court decided for the first time that the Second Amendment confers a constitutional right to carry a gun outside of the home. They voided a New York requirement that a concealed carry permit applicant demonstrate "proper cause," or a special need for self-defense.

Maryland's structure for carrying firearms in public has a requirement similar to that in the NY law requiring that an applicant needs to have a "good and substantial" reason for carrying a firearm in public. Maryland's status as a "May-Issue" state goes back at least 50 years. In addition to limiting the number of public carry permits in the state, this framework also allowed Maryland State Police (MSP) to grant permits with restrictions so that the permit holder was only allowed to public carry in circumstances that met the "good and substantial" need, not all of the time.

As recently as 1990 the vast majority of states were either “May Issue” or the even more restrictive “No Issue” states. Only 11 states were “Shall-Issue” and only 1 state was Permitless. That landscape is markedly different today, with only about 5 states having been able to hold onto their stricter “May-Issue” status prior to the *Bruen* decision being handed down. This movement coincides with increased marketing and lobbying by the gun industry to expand sales and increase political pressure. In *Bruen*, Maryland was specifically called out as having a law affected by the ruling.

In the immediate aftermath of the decision, MSP lifted the restrictions on all current permit holders holding restricted permits (those permits that only allowed public carry for particular reasons). This immediately allowed thousands of permit holders to carry guns in spaces that they had not been allowed to carry the day before. In addition to those, MSP saw 96,892 permit applications filed in 2022 and granted 80,601. As a comparison, the prior year saw only 18,849 applications and 18,667 granted.

[Research](#) indicates that more guns in public spaces equals more gun violence. The linked Scientific American article profiles much of the research on both sides of this issue, but the conclusion is clear that gun violence is higher where the access to guns is greater. While research in this area has historically been stunted by CDC restrictions, about 30 careful studies all lead to that conclusion. Likely there are multiple reasons for this including that having a gun may change behavior so that people take chances they would not otherwise take and go places where it is not safe to go. But also, more guns in more spaces increases opportunities for people to steal them and use them nefariously. (See also *The New York Times*, [Largest Source of Stolen Guns? Parked Cars.](#))

From accidental discharges, like the one that occurred at [Arundel Mills Mall](#) in October to [road rage incidents](#) like the one in Pikesville in November that claimed the life of a 29-year-old tow truck driver to [vigilante](#) deadly force being deployed by a scared shop owner against an unmarked police vehicle in December, guns carried into public spaces lead to more gun violence.

The goal of SB1 is to make sure that the people who are authorized to carry firearms into public spaces are adequately trained and determined by MSP to be people who do not demonstrate a propensity for violence. In addition, the Supreme Court emphasized that there are still spaces where the public carrying of firearms may be deemed inappropriate. This legislation seeks to codify those sensitive locations with enough specificity to provide clear guidance to permit holders.

MPGV urges a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 1.