



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 21, 2024

HB 794

Regulated Firearms – Maryland Voluntary Do Not Sell Firearm Process

House Judiciary Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers this testimony as in support of House Bill 794. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 794 requires the Maryland Department of Health to create and maintain a Maryland Voluntary Do Not Sell Firearm Registry in which a person may voluntarily enroll for the purpose of being prohibited from obtaining a firearm.

The establishment of a Voluntary Do Not Sell Firearm Registry offers a proactive and compassionate response to the epidemic of gun violence. By providing individuals with the opportunity to voluntarily enroll in the registry and thereby prohibit themselves from obtaining regulated firearms, we empower them to make choices that prioritize the safety of themselves and others. This initiative respects the autonomy and agency of individuals while also recognizing the collective responsibility we share for the common good.

The Catholic Church has a strong interest in public safety and keeping communities safe. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops states in response to rising violence that “[w]e have an obligation to respond. Violence – in our homes, our schools and streets, our nation and world – is destroying the lives, dignity and hopes of millions of our sisters and brothers.” To that point, the Church supports legislation that controls and strengthens regulations on firearms, and other such legislation that makes our communities safer. When community members are not in fear of their lives, they can live up to their God-given potential and enrich the world around them. The MCC will continue to work to combat violence and promote a culture of peace.

The MCC appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 794.

