



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

February 19, 2025

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: Senate Bill (SB) 943 – Family and Law Enforcement Protection Act – Letter of Support with Amendments

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (Department) respectfully submits this letter of support with amendments for Senate Bill (SB) 943 – Family and Law Enforcement Protection Act. SB 943 seeks to increase the implementation and compliance of firearm surrender after a domestic violence protective order (DVPO) has been issued.

Domestic violence is a public health crisis impacting communities all over Maryland, and the intersection of domestic violence and firearms is particularly deadly. In 2021, there were 88 domestic violence homicides, and more than half of them were committed with a firearm.¹ The impacts of domestic firearm violence can extend far into the community. More than two-thirds of all mass shootings in the United States started with a domestic violence incident or by a perpetrator with a history of domestic violence.²

Addressing domestic gun violence and intimate partner violence is key to the mission of the Department's new Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention (the Center). The Center was established in 2024 to reduce gun violence through a public health approach. SB 943 establishes the Task Force to Study the Use of Firearms in Domestic Violence Situations, staffed by the Center, to analyze and examine stakeholder accountability in firearm surrender following the issuance of a DVPO. However, the time line prescribed in the bill will not be enough for the Task Force to convene, collect and analyse the insights from all the different members, and craft a report. Therefore, the Department recommends extending the time period to twelve months.

¹ WISQARS. (2021) National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) <https://wisqars.cdc.gov/nvdrs/> Domestic violence includes: spouse or other intimate partner (current or ex), parent, child, other relative, and other intimate partner involvement.

² Geller, L.B., Booty, M. & Crifasi, C.K. (2021). The role of domestic violence in fatal mass shootings in the United States, 2014–2019. *Injury Epidemiology*.

The Department supports efforts to strengthen the firearm surrender process to protect families and the law enforcement officers from the escalation of violence during domestic violence cases. If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "LH Scott", is positioned above the typed name.

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary

In the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BILL 943

(First Reading File Bill)

On page 13, line 3, strike “November 15, 2025” and insert “**May 15, 2026**” and on page 13, line 10, strike “6 months and, by the end of November 2025” and insert “**12 months and, by the end of May 30, 2026**”.