



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 0509

**Prohibited Possession of Firearms - Assisted Outpatient Treatment
Respondents
FAVORABLE**

TO: Sen. William C. Smith, Chair; Sen. Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice-Chair; and the Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Rev. Kenneth Phelps, Jr., The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

DATE: February 7, 2025

In 2022, the 80th General Convention of the Episcopal Church commended investment in evidence-based community violence intervention programs and strategies that address gun violence as a public health issue; called for the strengthening of anti-violence social norms; and ending the proliferation of guns in our society. Further, the Church called upon its dioceses, congregations and individual Episcopalians to advocate for funding and public policy to support community violence intervention programs and strategies that have been proven to reduce gun violence. In that spirit, I thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony on behalf of the Diocese of Maryland.

This bill is another small step in the right direction. Our community has stated support for adequate weapons regulation as an essential for public safety. Typically, regulation policy for weapons is well below the necessary according to the standard advocated by our community. We have supported many pieces of Maryland legislation to adequately regulate weapons in the community.

Senate Bill 509 is a reasonable extension of so-called “red flag” laws, which we have supported and which public reporting indicates can have their intended effect; namely to separate lethal weaponry from credible behavioral health risk. Court-ordered treatment in response to behavioral incidents and issues is a good place to put a red flag. Reducing risks to self and others ought to include limiting access to weaponry. Public safety needs to be restored to a prominence it once had acquired in law and policy.

The Diocese of Maryland requests a Favorable report