



Date: February 17, 2025

To: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and the Judicial Proceedings Committee

Reference: Senate Bill 943, Family and Law Enforcement Protection Act

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

On behalf of LifeBridge Health's Center for Hope, we thank you for this opportunity to provide information in support of Senate Bill 943. Center for Hope provides intervention and prevention for over 7,700 survivors and caregivers impacted by child abuse, domestic violence, community violence, and elder abuse. At LifeBridge Health, we recognize the devastating impact of violence in our communities and the growing number of victims of all ages. As a public health issue, we need to help our communities by partnering with the people in them to break the cycle of violence.

The Center for Hope **strongly supports Senate Bill 943 – Family and Law Enforcement Protection Act**. This legislation orders respondents subject to an interim protective order to surrender firearms in their possession to law enforcement and prohibits them from purchasing a firearm for the duration of the interim protective order. Decades of research support the notion that restricting access to firearms immediately following an incident of domestic or intimate partner violence helps save lives.¹ This bill does exactly that.

An estimated 10 million people and children in the United States are exposed to domestic violence each year. Notably, the mere presence of a firearm in an episode of intimate partner violence increases the risk of homicide by 500%.² An estimated 57% of Maryland's domestic violence-related homicides in Maryland were by firearm.³ The impact of domestic violence goes beyond the intimate partners and includes children who witness and live with domestic violence. Such exposure is not only traumatic, but sometimes deadly. FBI data shows that in domestic violence homicides where at least one person was killed in addition to the intimate

¹Díez, C., Kurland, R. P., Rothman, E. F., Bair-Merritt, M., Fleegler, E., Xuan, Z., Galea, S., Ross, C. S., Kalesan, B., Goss, K. A., & Siegel, M. (2017). State Intimate Partner Violence-Related Firearm Laws and Intimate Partner Homicide Rates in the United States, 1991 to 2015. *Annals of internal medicine*, 167(8), 536–543. (State domestic violence laws reduce intimate partner homicide by firearm by 14% when restraining orders are combined with orders for the abuser to relinquish firearms). See also Zeoli, A. M., McCourt, A., Buggs, S., Frattaroli, S., Lilley, D., & Webster, D. W. (2018). Analysis of the Strength of Legal Firearms Restrictions for Perpetrators of Domestic Violence and Their Associations With Intimate Partner Homicide. *American journal of epidemiology*, 187(11), 2365–2371.

² Campbell, J. C., Webster, D., Koziol-McLain, J., et al. (2003). Risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships: Results from a multisite case control study. *American journal of public health*, 93(7), 1089-1097.

³ This is the most recent data available (2022) from the CDC. See <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/center-for-gun-violence-solutions/maryland>.

partner, a quarter of those additional victims were children under the age of 18.⁴ Exposure to adverse childhood experiences, such as child abuse and domestic violence, increases a child's risk of long-term physical and mental health problems. Inhibiting access to firearms during the interim protective order stage helps to protect families and children during a period that is statistically the most dangerous.

For all the above stated reasons, we request a favorable report for Senate Bill 943.

For more information, please contact:

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⁴ <https://www.bradyunited.org/resources/issues/domestic-violence-and-guns-2>