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Favorable Testimony on House Bill 1202  
Maryland House Judiciary Committee

Chairman, Vice Chair, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

The Maryland State's Attorney's Association and Frederick County State's Attorney's Office submits this testimony in strong support of House Bill 1202, which expands the definition of a "drug trafficking crime" to include certain misdemeanor offenses under Maryland's Criminal Law Article, specifically sections 5-602(b)(1) and 5-603(b). This amendment is a crucial step in strengthening Maryland's ability to combat the intersection of drug distribution and firearm-related violence.

House Bill 1202 recognizes the evolving nature of drug trafficking crimes and ensures that the legal framework reflects the reality that even lower-level drug offenses can be directly tied to violent crime when firearms are involved. By expanding the definition of drug trafficking crimes to include certain misdemeanors, law enforcement and prosecutors will have additional tools to address dangerous offenders who utilize firearms to facilitate drug-related offenses.

Studies from the Bureau of Justice Statistics indicate that approximately 21% of state and federal drug offenders used or possessed a firearm during their offense. Moreover, the Maryland Statistical Analysis Center has reported an increasing correlation between illegal firearm possession and drug distribution cases.

House Bill 1202 provides a targeted approach to addressing the nexus between drug distribution and firearms while ensuring that law enforcement can hold accountable those who perpetuate violence within our communities. For these reasons, the Frederick County State's Attorney's Office urges a favorable report on House Bill 1202.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Joyce King  
Chief Counsel