



Testimony in **Support** of the
Family & Law Enforcement Protection Act
SB943/HB1050
Karen Herren, Executive Director

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Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence (MPGV) Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 943/House Bill 1050

Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence (MPGV) is a statewide organization dedicated to reducing gun deaths and injuries in Maryland. We urge the committee to issue a **Favorable** report on Senate Bill 943/House Bill 1050.

The Problem

While domestic violence may not always begin with gun violence, firearms too often become the tragic endpoint of an escalating cycle of abuse. Recent incidents in Maryland underscore the devastating consequences of domestic violence combined with easy firearm access:

- **January 2024:** A Glenelg father shot and killed his two teenage children before taking his own life.
- **May 2024:** An Elkridge father killed his wife, daughter-in-law, and adult daughter, and wounded his adult son before dying by suicide.
- **June 2024:** A 12-year-old Baltimore girl was shot and killed by her mother's former intimate partner, who had previously threatened the family.
- **October 2023:** A Maryland judge was shot and killed in his driveway by a man who had just lost a custody ruling.

These stories are not isolated incidents. Each year between 2019 and 2023, an average of **47 individuals in Maryland lost their lives to domestic violence**. In 2023 alone, **at least 32 children** in our state were left without one or both parents due to domestic violence.

Despite existing legal protections, gaps in Maryland law **fail to ensure the prompt and consistent surrender of firearms** from individuals subject to protective orders. This leaves survivors and their families vulnerable to further harm.

The Need for Action

When an individual is legally prohibited from possessing a firearm—whether through a protective order or a criminal conviction¹—**swift and enforceable firearm relinquishment is critical**. Maryland's process for Domestic Violence Protective Order (DVPO) proceedings relies too heavily on self-compliance, putting lives at risk.

- **Protective order respondents are not consistently required to surrender firearms until a final order is issued**, meaning abusers can retain their weapons during a period of heightened danger.
- **Judges and Commissioners often lack crucial information early in proceedings** to mandate firearm relinquishment.
- **Victims are often overwhelmed, fearful, or unaware of what information is needed** to trigger court-ordered firearm removal.
- **Courts and law enforcement often lack the necessary information** or clear procedures to take further action when a respondent fails to surrender firearms as required under a DVPO. Without proper tracking and follow-up, dangerous individuals may continue to possess firearms, putting victims and their families at risk.

The Solution – Senate Bill 943/House Bill 1050

SB 943/HB 1050 strengthens firearm relinquishment procedures in domestic violence cases by:

1. **Allowing the court to order the surrender** of firearms at the interim phase when the circumstances warrant it.
2. **Requiring immediate firearm surrender** when a temporary protective order is issued.
3. **Asking relevant and thought-provoking questions of petitioners** to better understand the scope of the situation.
4. **Extending relinquishment requirements** to include both firearms and handgun qualification licenses.
5. **Creating a work group of relevant stakeholders to evaluate the process** and identify further needed modifications to enhance safety for all.
6. **Establishing clear guidelines for firearm storage and retrieval, with return** only when legally permitted.

¹ Note that this legislation does not address the surrender process for criminal convictions and is limited specifically to DVPO civil court proceedings. Problems with the criminal processes will need to be addressed at a later point in time.

Conclusion

Failing to disarm dangerous individuals when protective orders are issued leaves survivors, families, and communities at risk. Maryland needs to **prioritize the safety of domestic violence victims** by ensuring a swift, enforceable, and accountable firearm relinquishment process.

MPGV urges a **Favorable** report on SB 943/HB1050. Thank you for your time and consideration.