



Testimony in **Support** of the  
**Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act**  
**HB 387**

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Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence

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Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice-Chair Wilkins, and distinguished members of the committee,

Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence (MPGV) is a statewide organization dedicated to reducing gun deaths and injuries in Maryland. We urge the committee for an **Favorable** report on **House Bill 387**.

House Bill 387 proposes to establish an 11% excise tax on firearms to fund programs in order to offset the devastating effects that the firearm industry has on society. This bill is a critical step towards holding the firearms industry accountable for the impact of their products on our communities while providing much-needed resources to address this urgent public health crisis.

### **HISTORICAL PRECEDENT**

For over a century, the firearms industry has been subject to a federal level excise tax on firearms, ammunition, and parts and accessories under the Pittman-Robertson Act<sup>1</sup>. For most of this time, the proceeds from this tax have gone to offset the harm the industry inflicts on wildlife conservation efforts<sup>2</sup>. Meanwhile, the firearms industry continues to enjoy record growth and profits while largely evading financial responsibility for the havoc wrought by its products on human lives and communities. This is all despite the fact that recent trends in the industry indicate that a dwindling percentage of firearm related sales are toward hunting efforts.<sup>3</sup> It is time for the firearms industry to bear more of the costs of the societal harm their products enable.

### **GROWTH OF THE INDUSTRY**

In economic data presented by the National Shooting Sports Foundation the industry has enjoyed exponential growth and profit in recent years. By their own calculations, the firearm industry's economic impact has risen 371% since 2008<sup>4</sup>. This impact is not factoring in the actual cost to society of the gun violence that their products facilitate. During this time of the industry's exponential growth, we have witnessed an unprecedented spike in shootings and gun homicides across the nation and in Maryland.

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<sup>1</sup> 16 U.S.C.A. §669 et seq

<sup>2</sup> [Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act explained](#)

<sup>3</sup> A 2021 [study](#) by Southwick Associates estimated that about one-quarter (25.8 percent) of all firearms and ammunition sold in 2020 were purchased for hunting.

<sup>4</sup><https://www.nssf.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/2024-Economic-Impact-Report.pdf>

## **COST OF GUN VIOLENCE**

Taxing the firearms industry is not only a reasonable measure but a necessary one to generate sustained revenue for programs that mitigate the devastating societal effects of gun violence. In an average year in America, gun violence kills 45,000 people, wounds another 96,000, and costs a staggering \$557.2 billion<sup>5</sup>. In Maryland, we are seeing almost 805 people die by guns annually with another 1,745 wounded. The estimated economic cost in the state of this epidemic is around \$10.5 billion with at least \$383.9 million being paid by taxpayers<sup>6</sup>.

For some context, the \$557 billion national number is more than twice the nation's budget for the Department of Education, which funds preschool through college for millions of Americans. Imagine the good we could do allocating those resources toward beneficial and productive investments such as educating the next generation instead of the need to pay for the tragic consequences of gun violence<sup>7</sup>.

Firearms and ammunition sold by licensed manufacturers, dealers, and vendors of these products contribute to gun violence and broader harms. Whether through corrupt or negligent licensed dealers, straw purchasers, or theft and loss from sellers, gun dealers are the leading source of firearms trafficked to illegal markets. For years, the industry has rejected modernizing systems that could assist in stemming this flow, resisted mandates that would require stronger gun store security to prevent theft, and/or innovations in the products themselves that would make them safer and less accessible to non-authorized users.

Taxing the firearms industry would place a reasonable cost on its members profiting from the sale of their products in order to generate sustained revenue for programs that are designed to remediate the devastating effects these products cause families and communities across this state. As survivors, families, communities, employers, and taxpayers, we all pay for the enormous costs associated with this violence, whether we own a gun or not.

## **MARYLAND EXAMPLES**

On July 2, 2023 a mass shooting in the Brooklyn Homes neighborhood of Baltimore led to 2 deaths and 28 wounded. In addition to the devastating human loss and suffering, the economic costs of this one event are staggering. This one horrific incident of gun violence left an estimated \$59.3 million price tag, of which \$2.5 million is borne by taxpayers.<sup>8</sup> On December 17, 2024, a mass shooting in Baltimore County left one dead and 9 others wounded for an estimated cost of \$25 million, with over \$1 million of that borne by taxpayers.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> [https://everystat.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/USA\\_2024-October.pdf](https://everystat.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/USA_2024-October.pdf)

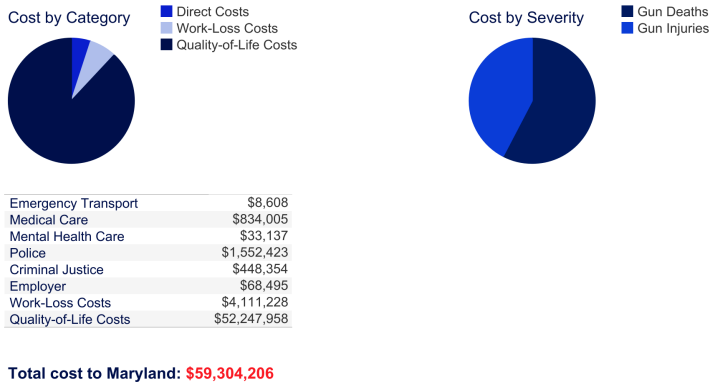
<sup>6</sup> [https://everystat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Maryland\\_2024-October.pdf](https://everystat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Maryland_2024-October.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-economic-cost-of-gun-violence/?\\_gl=1\\*sfct83\\*\\_ga\\*NDM2MDkzNDc1LjE3MDcyNDI0MjQ.\\*\\_ga\\_LT0FWV3EK3\\*MTcwNzI0MjQyNS4xLjEuMTcwNzI0MjQ0NS4wLjAuMA](https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-economic-cost-of-gun-violence/?_gl=1*sfct83*_ga*NDM2MDkzNDc1LjE3MDcyNDI0MjQ.*_ga_LT0FWV3EK3*MTcwNzI0MjQyNS4xLjEuMTcwNzI0MjQ0NS4wLjAuMA) and <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/overview/budget/budget24/24action.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://everytownresearch.org/report/economic-cost-calculator/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://abcnews.go.com/US/mass-shooting-maryland-leaves-1-dead-9-injured/story?id=116889993> and <https://everytownresearch.org/report/economic-cost-calculator/>

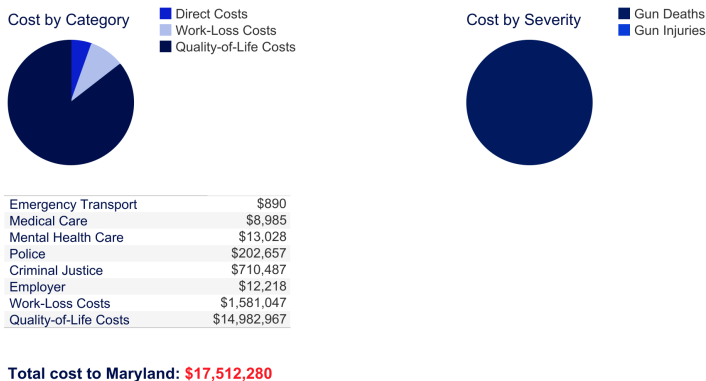
Cost to society for 2 gun deaths and 28 nonfatal gun injuries (Mass Shooting) in Maryland.



### Calculator for the Brooklyn Homes shooting

Even a single homicide is estimated to cost the state \$17.5 million in costs to survivors and families directly affected, employers, government, and the broader community. Taxpayers shoulder \$925,959 of this through the government portion of medical and mental health care, first responders, ambulances, police response and investigations, and criminal justice services.<sup>10</sup>

Cost to society for 1 gun deaths and 0 nonfatal gun injuries (Assault or Homicide) in Maryland.



### Calculator for a single victim shooting death

Quantifying what we spend in the aftermath of a shooting—whether the shooting was unintentional, an assault, a shooting by police, or an act of suicide—helps us understand the price we pay for this violence.

<sup>10</sup> <https://everytownresearch.org/report/economic-cost-calculator/#economic-cost-calculator>

## KEY INITIATIVES

By passing House Bill 387, Maryland can take a decisive stand against gun violence and invest in programs that prioritize public safety, improve community well-being, and address the damage of gun violence. The bill specifically allocates money to the following initiatives:

- **The Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund** - Administered by the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention, MD VIPP finances organizations providing violence intervention and prevention services in heavily impacted communities<sup>11</sup>.
- **The Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention** - This recently established office, now within the Maryland Department of Health, coordinates efforts to address and prevent gun violence. While still in its early stages, the Center is focused on implementing comprehensive strategies to reduce firearm-related harm and ensure resources are directed to impacted communities where they are needed the most.
- **The Survivors of Homicide Victims Grant Program** - Managed by the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention, this program offers victim assistance, advocacy, and support, ensuring survivors exercise their legal rights<sup>12</sup>.
- **Consortium on Coordinated Community Supports Partnership Fund** - The Partnership Fund enhances student behavioral health by fostering community partnerships that provide holistic, non-stigmatized services and supports to address students' behavioral health needs and promote academic success.
- **The Maryland Trauma Physician Services Fund** - Allocates funding to medical systems to address trauma-related healthcare costs, with a significant portion attributed to gun violence. The medical care associated with gun violence is notably expensive, averaging approximately \$30,000 for survivors in the year following the injury<sup>13</sup>.
- **The R. Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center at the University of Maryland Medical System** - The R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center is a world renowned medical facility specializing in providing emergency trauma care and critical medical treatment to patients who have experienced severe injuries or medical emergencies. It is recognized for its expertise in trauma care and its commitment to saving lives in critical situations<sup>14</sup>.

**We urge a FAVORABLE report on HB387.**

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<sup>11</sup> <https://goccp.maryland.gov/grants/programs/vipp/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://goccp.maryland.gov/grants/programs/sohg/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://hms.harvard.edu/news/business-case-reducing-gun-violence>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.umms.org/ummc/health-services/shock-trauma/about>