

Brady  
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Testimony of Ramya Swami, Manager, State Policy, Brady  
**Support for HB 387 [FAV]**  
Before the Maryland House Ways and Means Committee  
February 13, 2025

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice-Chair Wilkins, and other distinguished members of the Maryland House Ways and Means Committee,

Founded in 1974, Brady works across Congress, courts, and communities, uniting gun owners and non-gun owners alike to end America's gun violence epidemic. Our organization today carries the name of Jim Brady, who was shot and severely injured in the assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan. Jim and his wife, Sarah, led the fight to pass federal legislation requiring background checks for gun sales. Brady continues to uphold Jim and Sarah's legacy by uniting Americans across the country in the fight to prevent gun violence.

Brady applauds the thoughtful work and legislative efforts of this body to prevent and end gun violence throughout the state. Tragically, despite these efforts and some of the strongest gun laws in the nation, each year, 785 Marylanders are killed by gun violence, and 493 of those deaths are from firearm homicides.<sup>1</sup> We need only look at the fact that Maryland has the seventh highest firearm homicide rate in the country to see that gun violence is a crisis in Maryland communities and additional policies must be put in place to prevent further tragedies. **In furtherance of our goal to reduce firearm violence across the state and in communities of color, Brady strongly urges a favorable report on HB 387, the Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act (CCSFA).**

Gun violence is one of the most complex policy problems of our time, but the tools to address it are within our reach. The CCSFA is an innovative bill that imposes an excise tax on firearm sales to provide sustained funding to gun violence prevention programs, including community violence intervention efforts. The revenue generated from this tax will fund a number of life changing programs in the state, including the Coordinated Community Supports Partnership Fund, the Violence Prevention and Intervention Fund, and the State Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention, which this body worked hard to establish last legislative session.

By generating a reliable, sustained source for these funds this Act will enable the state to engage in

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. *Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS)* [online]. (2005) [cited 2024 Feb. 2]. Available at: [www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars](http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars).

effective and life-saving gun violence prevention programs. It will allow for coordination with schools, community groups on the ground, state agencies, and more in identifying high-impact policy solutions to curb Maryland's gun violence epidemic.

Gun violence is a public health, safety, and equity crisis. Since the start of the pandemic, our nation has seen record-setting gun and ammunition sales, alongside record nationwide increases in shootings, homicides, and related traumas. This has been a time of record profits for some and brutal pain and loss for too many others. This national gun violence crisis has also imposed an enormously unequal toll on communities of color in our state, where over 84% of youth homicide victims are Black or Latino, and where gun violence was already, prior to recent spikes in violence, by far the leading cause of death for young Black men and boys. This violence also imposes enormous burdens on those who are not direct victims too: experts at the National Institute of Justice have noted that “youth living in inner cities show a higher prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder than soldiers” in our wartime military.

In addition to its brutal human toll, gun violence also causes enormous economic harm and imposes enormous fiscal burdens on state and local governments and taxpayers. [Data](#) from the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions indicates that gun violence costs taxpayers in Maryland as much as \$9.1 billion per year. Sustained reductions in gun violence will require sustained investments in prevention and intervention efforts and longer-term planning to entrench virtuous cycles of trauma recovery, retaliation prevention, peace-building, and safety. That is why it has been a top priority for our organization to support the establishment of a dedicated revenue stream to sustain this lifesaving work through the CCSFA.

This bill is analogous to other firearm and ammunition industry tax measures that have been repeatedly upheld by the courts. Similar firearm, ammunition, and related industry excise taxes have also been in place at the federal level for over a century, and the gun industry has supported them. Since 1919, federal law has placed a 10 to 11% excise tax on the sale of guns, ammunition, and related products by licensed manufacturers, producers, and importers. Revenues from this excise tax have been used to fund wildlife conservation efforts that remediate the effects that guns and ammunition have on wildlife populations through hunting, particularly through grants to state wildlife agencies and for conservation-related research. The NRA has referred to this federal Firearms and Ammunition Excise tax as a “legislative model” and “friend of the hunter.”

Just as the federal tax on firearm industry manufacturers reasonably generates revenue to remediate the harmful effects that firearm industry commerce can have on wildlife, the CCSFA would place a tax on retail sellers profiting from the sale of the same products in order to fund programs that effectively remediate the devastating human toll these products take on families and communities across the state. This tax is a modest and reasonable excise tax on sellers whose lawful and legitimate commercial activity still imposes enormous harmful externalities on Maryland's families, communities, and taxpayers.

This bill is not intended to penalize firearm sellers or otherwise discourage lawful firearm sales and commerce whatsoever, but would reasonably generate revenue to sustain programs that are targeted and effective at mitigating the harms that firearms and related products too often cause. It would stop shootings, save lives, and make Maryland a better, safer place.

To promote community safety and mitigate the enormous collateral harms that flow from firearm industry commerce, Maryland must act to invest in violence intervention initiatives that work to interrupt entrenched cycles of shootings, trauma, and retaliation. These programs support and heal victims of firearm violence, and provide targeted intervention services to other individuals identified as highest risk of being shot or involved in cycles of violence in the near future.

**For these reasons, we urge a favorable report for HB 387.**

Sincerely,

Ramya Swami  
State Policy Manager,  
Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence