

GIFFORDS CENTER FOR VIOLENCE INTERVENTION

LETTER OF SUPPORT RE: HB 118 (BENSON), THE COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY SAFETY FUNDING ACT

TO: MARYLAND SENATE, WAYS AND MEANS
COMMITTEE

SUBMITTED BY: MIKE MCLIVELY, POLICY DIRECTOR
GIFFORDS CENTER FOR VIOLENCE INTERVENTION

DATE: March 9th, 2026

Re: Support for SB 118, The Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act

Dear Members of the Committee,

On behalf of GIFFORDS Center for Violence Intervention, which is part of GIFFORDS, the national gun violence prevention organization founded by former Congresswoman Gabby Giffords, **I am writing to express our strong support for Senate Bill 118, introduced by Senator Benson.** Gun violence is an ongoing public health and public safety crisis in the US. According to data from the CDC from September 2023 to August 2024, 696 Maryland residents lost their lives to gun violence,¹ and thousands more were shot and injured. The effects of these losses and injuries continue to ripple through entire communities.

At the same time, gun sales have skyrocketed in recent years, with a report by the National Shooting Sports Foundation declaring that “The economic growth America’s firearm and ammunition industry has experienced in recent years has been nothing short of remarkable.”² Through a variety of means, a large number of guns sold in legal markets are diverted into illegal markets and ultimately used in the commission of crimes and acts of violence that are imposing tremendous human and financial costs on the people of Maryland.

It’s time for the gun industry to help pay its fair share in supporting effective, lifesaving solutions to gun violence.

This critical legislation would help Maryland respond to the crisis of gun violence, which is the leading cause of death for American children today. SB 118 would levy a modest excise tax on

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/injury-violence-data/data-vis/index.html>

² <https://www.nssf.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/2022-Firearm-Ammunition-Industry-Economic-Impact.pdf>

firearm industry profits, and these revenues would be used to make long-term investments in a variety of vital initiatives designed to prevent gun violence, protect and heal survivors, and promote safety for all Marylanders. This includes the Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program (MDVIPP), the Survivors of Homicide Victims Grant Program, the Maryland Department of Health's Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention, as well as the Maryland Trauma Physicians Services fund.

Together, these programs help prevent death through skilled medical care, interrupt cycles of retaliation through intervention with those at highest risk, and support families that have been devastated by the loss of a loved one - all of these activities help reduce violence and mitigate the harms imposed by gun violence.

The excise tax created by SB 118 is both reasonable and modest and is in no way designed to prevent Marylanders from purchasing a firearm or exercising their Second Amendment rights. When the Maryland Legislature wants to discourage the purchase of a product, it knows how to do so: consider that the excise tax on the sale of certain tobacco products is as high as 70%.³

The 11% excise tax proposed in this bill is in line with a federal firearm and ammunition excise tax of 11%, a tax that has been praised and supported by the firearm industry itself, with the National Shooting Sports Foundation celebrating the members of Congress who sponsored the federal excise tax, which is used to fund wildlife conservation efforts.⁴

If the firearm industry can be supportive of a tax designed to protect wildlife, it should be just as supportive of a tax that is designed to protect human life.

Given the tremendous human and economic toll of gun violence in Maryland, this is a policy that will save lives and taxpayer dollars. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB 118.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Mike McLively
Policy Director
Giffords Center for Violence Intervention

³https://www.marylandtaxes.gov/forms/Tax_Publications/Tax_Alerts/Tax-Alert-Cigarettes-OT-ES-Ds-Tax-Rate-Changes.pdf

⁴ <https://www.nssf.org/government-relations/impact/>