



Testimony in **Support** of the  
**Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act**  
**SB118/HB197**

Executive Director Karen Herren  
Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence

March 5, 2026

Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence (MPGV) is a statewide organization dedicated to reducing gun deaths and injuries across Maryland. We respectfully urge the Committee to issue a **Favorable Report** on House Bill 197.

House Bill 197 would establish an 11% excise tax on firearms, ammunition, and select firearm parts to create a dedicated funding stream for gun violence prevention, intervention, and survivor support programs. This legislation ensures that the industry whose products generate significant public costs contributes to addressing the harm associated with those products. Maryland's recent progress in reducing firearm homicides has been driven in part by unprecedented coordination among federal, state, and local partners, supported by substantial federal investments. However, abrupt federal funding cancellations and disrupted grant commitments have created serious uncertainty for the very programs that are helping to reduce violence. Maryland cannot build durable public safety strategies on unstable funding streams. The Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act establishes a reliable, state-based source of revenue to sustain and strengthen this progress.

### **HISTORICAL PRECEDENT**

For more than a century, the firearms industry has been subject to a federal excise tax on firearms, ammunition, and related products under the Pittman-Robertson Act<sup>1</sup>. Revenues from that tax are dedicated to wildlife restoration and conservation, a recognition that the industry's products have environmental impacts requiring mitigation<sup>2</sup>.

While that federal framework directs industry-generated revenue toward wildlife conservation, there is no comparable mechanism to address the substantial public costs associated with firearm violence. At the same time, the firearms industry has experienced significant growth in recent years, even as hunting accounts for a declining share of overall firearm sales<sup>3</sup>. Yet the financial burden of gun violence, including medical care, law enforcement, lost productivity, and community trauma, continues to fall primarily on taxpayers and local governments.

Just as Congress long ago required the industry to help offset environmental impacts, Maryland can require the industry to contribute to addressing the societal costs associated with its products. It is reasonable and appropriate for the firearms industry to bear a greater share of those costs.

### **GROWTH OF THE INDUSTRY**

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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.

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.

## **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 46,000 people, wounds another 97,000, and costs a staggering \$557.2 billion<sup>5</sup>. In Maryland, we are seeing 797 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>.

Firearms and ammunition sold by licensed manufacturers and dealers are a primary source of guns that ultimately end up in crime. Firearms are diverted into illegal markets through negligent or bad-actor dealers, straw purchasing, and theft from inadequately secured retailers. Data consistently show that a relatively small number of dealers account for a disproportionate share of crime guns. Yet the industry has repeatedly resisted commonsense reforms, including stronger dealer oversight, enhanced security requirements to prevent theft, and product safety innovations that could reduce unauthorized access.

An excise tax on the firearms industry is a reasonable way to ensure that those who profit from the sale of these products contribute to addressing the public costs associated with their misuse. The revenue generated would support evidence-based programs designed to prevent violence, intervene in cycles of harm, and assist survivors. Currently, the financial burden of gun violence falls on families, employers, local governments, and taxpayers, regardless of whether they own firearms. This legislation shifts a portion of that burden back to the industry whose products generate these costs.

## **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>7</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>8</sup>

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

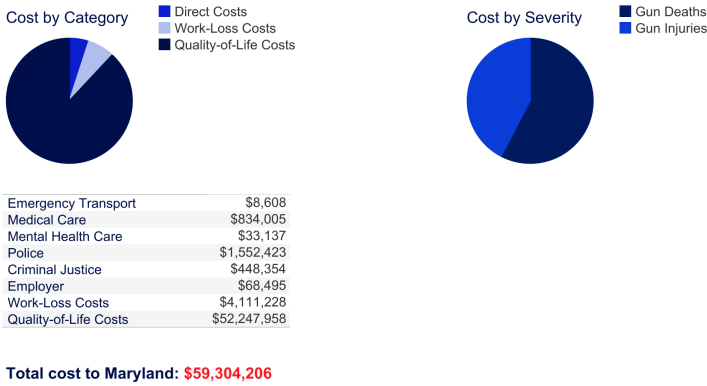
<sup>5</sup> [https://everystat.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/USA\\_2024-October.pdf](https://everystat.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/USA_2024-October.pdf)

<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/economic-cost-calculator/>

<sup>8</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/>

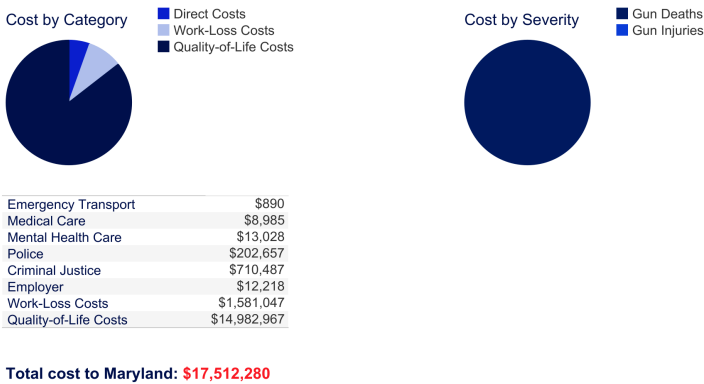
Cost to society for 2 gun deaths and 28 nonfatal gun injuries (Mass Shooting) in Maryland.



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>9</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.

**KEY INITIATIVES**

<sup>9</sup> <https://everytownresearch.org/report/economic-cost-calculator/#economic-cost-calculator>

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>10</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>11</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>12</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>13</sup>.

**We urge a FAVORABLE report on HB197.**

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<sup>10</sup> <https://goccp.maryland.gov/grants/programs/vipp/>

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

<sup>12</sup> <https://hms.harvard.edu/news/business-case-reducing-gun-violence>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.umms.org/ummc/health-services/shock-trauma/about>

## Sign-On Letter in Support of the Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act

*This letter is currently supported by 28 organizations and 100 Maryland residents from across the state.*

Dear Members of the Maryland General Assembly,

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, urge your support for the Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act, a fiscally responsible, public-health-driven solution to sustain Maryland's progress in preventing and addressing gun violence.

This legislation establishes a dedicated, long-term funding source for community violence intervention, trauma care, student behavioral health initiatives, and support for survivors of homicide victims, all without placing new demands on the state's General Fund. By creating a modest excise on the firearm industry, the Act ensures that those who profit from the sale of firearms also help offset the measurable public costs of gun violence.

Maryland's trauma centers, hospital-based intervention programs, and community-led safety initiatives save lives every day. But these proven approaches require consistent, dependable investment. This legislation provides the sustainable infrastructure needed to maintain and expand what works, programs that reduce shootings and lower healthcare costs, and the building of safer, stronger communities across our state.

At a time when federal funding for violence prevention is declining, Maryland has the opportunity to lead. The Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act reflects fiscal responsibility and moral clarity, a smart strategy that protects both lives and state resources. Supporting this bill gives legislative leaders the chance to champion a policy win that unites public safety, fiscal prudence, and community wellbeing.

We respectfully ask that you make passage of the Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act a priority for the 2026 session.

Sincerely,

*Karen Herren*

*Executive Director*  
**Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence**  
*Facilitator*  
**Maryland Violence Prevention Coalition**

## **Organizations (28)**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence   | Gun Violence Prevention Ministry of St. John's Norwood Episcopal Church, Chevy Chase |
| Institute for Public Health Innovation  |  |
| Roca  | National Offices of Violence Prevention Network, NICJR                               |
| Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence  | LifeBridge Health/Center for Hope  |
| The Brain Injury Association of Maryland  | Congregation Oseh Shalom (Laurel, MD)  |
| Critical Issues Forum: Advocacy for Social Justice                                  | Sisters of Bon Secours, USA  |
| GIFFORDS  | Maryland United for Peace and Justice  |
| The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention (The HAVI)                            | Baltimore Washington Conference UMC - Advocacy and Action                            |
| National Council of Jewish Women, Maryland  | Team ENOUGH Baltimore  |
| Brady   | Presbyterians for Police Transformation  |
| Kevin L. Cooper Foundation  | Center for Criminal Justice Reform, University of Baltimore School of Law            |
| Advance Maryland  | Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland                              |
| Community Justice   |  |
| University of Baltimore, School of Law, Center for Criminal Justice Reform          | Bullying Intervention Teams (BIT), Inc.  |
| Temple Shalom (Chevy Chase)   |  |
| Social Justice Advocacy Committee, St. John's Norwood Episcopal Church, Chevy Chase |  |

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## **Individuals (100)**

Ken Shilling

Jane Rosov

Marina Khazanov

Dr. Rabiatu Barrie, Assistant Professor  
at UMD

Michelle Knight

Zamaria Bethea, ERPO Program  
Coordinator at MPG

Brianna Rock, Violence Prevention  
Program Supervisor

Monique Yates

Penelope Wider

Francis Li

Margaret Sanders

Brooke Lindsay

Cynthia Sokolow

July Schiffer

Natalie Vinski Ibrahim

Maura Dunnigan

Thomas Kennedy

Melissa Hook

Sophia Thomas

Lisa Siano

James Caldiero

Janet M. Simons

Lisa P. Snyder

John R. Leek

Debra Brown Felser

Tony Hausner

Alan Wojtalik

Francis Kozak

Richard Stern

Nancy Brucks

Justin Truong

Janet Carpenter

Lisa Morris

Cathy Stogel

Elsie Heyrman Klumpner

James Dempse

Andrea LeWinter

Aaron M. Ucko

William Thompson "Bill" Wood

Jacqueline London

Cynthia Alden

Catherine LaFerriere

Kenneth Matthew Douglas

Cairn Krafft

Mary Burton

|                            |                              |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Martha Hare                | Catherine Harmon             |
| Mr. Christopher Ecker      | Richard A. Hoehn             |
| Michael Marciarille DeLong | Carol A. Creed               |
| Arielle Juberg             | Geraldine Garvey             |
| Danielle Veith             | Paul Rohr                    |
| Jack Rosenthal             | Marlene Joy Dunsmore         |
| Elsie Handelman            | Anne Marie MacInnes          |
| Andra DiStefano            | Claudia Smith                |
| Yale Stenzler              | Christina Pham Linhoff       |
| Ellen Simsohn              | Liz Smith                    |
| Dora Elaine Tiller         | Charles Douglas Jarrett      |
| Cindy Whitt                | Maryanne Bailey              |
| Sharon Blinder Hill        | Robert Tiller                |
| Arthur Spilkia             | Sister Bernadette Claps, CBS |
| Evelyn Scozzafava          | Julie Burns                  |
| Zoe Gordon                 | Karen Gregory                |
| Helene S. Goldberg         | Susan Wilensky               |
| Allen Minton               | Bonnie Schofield             |
| Becky Gail Lessey          | Virginia Novak               |
| Margie McCormick           | James Wilson Walters         |
| Ruth P. Moskof             | Lillian Luksenburg           |
| Jacqueline M. Nichols      | Sara Palmer                  |
| Elaine Wunderlich          | Marsha Lerner Teichman       |

Nicole Berger

Marjorie Winslow

Robert Bajefsky

Ellen Davis

Erica Colbert

Jim Lieberman

Anna Jelen

Sister Patricia Kirk, Benedictine Sister

Tia Richards