



**Testimony in Support of the  
Family & Law Enforcement Protection Act  
Senate Bill 20 / House Bill 83  
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Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence (MPGV) is a statewide organization dedicated to reducing gun deaths and injuries through evidence-based policy, public education, and survivor-centered prevention strategies. We strongly support **SB 20 / HB 83**, the *Family and Law Enforcement Protection Act*.

**The Problem: Domestic Violence + Firearm Access Is Lethal**

Domestic violence often escalates over time. When firearms are present, that escalation is far more likely to end in death. Firearms are used in a significant share of intimate partner homicides, and the period surrounding the issuance of a protective order is widely recognized as one of the most dangerous moments for victims and their families<sup>1</sup>.

In Maryland, domestic violence continues to claim dozens of lives each year. Between 2019 and 2023, an average of approximately 47 people per year were killed as a result of domestic violence. In 2023 alone, at least 32 Maryland children were left without one or both parents due to domestic-violence-related fatalities<sup>2</sup>.

The most recent year underscores the urgency of action. In 2025, Maryland experienced at least 40 domestic-violence-related firearm incidents, resulting in at least 39 deaths. These tragedies occurred across legislative districts and communities throughout the state<sup>3</sup>, including:

**District 18:** A 47-year-old woman was shot and killed after being ambushed outside her home by her ex-partner.

**District 20:** A 22-year-old man was shot and killed by a 20-year-old relative.

**District 26:** A 25-year-old man shot and killed his 45-year-old mother.

**District 30:** An 18-year-old was shot and injured by his girlfriend's adult son.

**District 34:** A 64-year-old woman was shot and killed by her 66-year-old husband.

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<sup>1</sup> Jacquelyn C. Campbell, et al. "Risk Factors for Femicide in Abusive Relationships: Results From a Multisite Case Control Study", *American Journal of Public Health* 93, no. 7 (July 1, 2003): pp. 1089-1097. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.93.7.1089>

<sup>2</sup> MNADV's 2022-2023 [MD-DVFRSIT Report](#)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/query/796b8403-c412-4cfb-9cca-dbee4948df7f>



**District 42:** A 65-year-old man killed his 69-year-old ex-wife.

**District 44A:** A 42-year-old woman and a 6-year-old child were shot and killed by a 43-year-old man in an incident classified as a “family annihilation.”

**District 44B:** A 46-year-old man was shot and killed by his 42-year-old partner.

These incidents are not isolated. They reflect a persistent reality in Maryland: domestic violence can escalate quickly, and when firearms are involved, the likelihood of a fatal outcome increases, sometimes in a matter of minutes. That is why policies that reduce firearm access during periods of elevated risk are a critical component of domestic gun violence prevention.

### **Why Current Law Falls Short**

Federal law prohibits firearm possession by individuals subject to certain domestic violence protective orders, but it does **not** require firearm removal at the temporary or interim stages. As a result, states must fill this gap if protective orders are to function as meaningful, life-saving interventions.

Many states already do. At least 13 states require firearm prohibition and removal at the temporary protective order stage, and many of these laws have been in place for decades. These states span the political spectrum and demonstrate that early firearm relinquishment is both workable and effective<sup>4</sup>.

Maryland law, however, falls short in critical ways.

While Maryland prohibits firearm possession by respondents subject to certain final protective orders, it does not consistently require firearm prohibition and surrender during the temporary phase, even though that period is widely recognized as one of heightened danger. Prohibition alone is not enough. Without clear, enforceable, and timely relinquishment procedures, firearms often remain in the hands of individuals who have already demonstrated dangerous behavior.

Key gaps in Maryland’s current Domestic Violence Protective Order (DVPO) framework include:

- **Delayed surrender requirements:** Firearms may remain accessible until a final protective order is issued, despite the heightened risk immediately following service of a temporary order.
- **Insufficient information early in proceedings:** Judges and Commissioners often lack critical facts at the interim and temporary stages needed to assess firearm access and order surrender when it matters most.
- **Overreliance on victims:** Petitioners, often traumatized, fearful, or unrepresented, are expected to know what information to provide to trigger firearm removal.

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<sup>4</sup> See chart at the end of this document for more information.



- **Weak verification and follow-up:** Courts and law enforcement lack consistent mechanisms to verify compliance or respond when firearms are not surrendered, allowing prohibited individuals to remain armed.

A robust body of research shows that removing firearms during domestic violence interventions significantly reduces the risk of intimate partner homicide, particularly during periods of separation and court involvement<sup>5</sup>.

## The Solution: SB 20 / HB 83

### The Family and Law Enforcement Protection Act

SB 20 / HB 83 addresses these gaps by strengthening Maryland's DVPO firearm relinquishment framework in a targeted, practical, and survivor-centered manner.

This legislation:

- **Closes the federal law gap** by ensuring firearm surrender requirements apply at the temporary protective order stage, when a court has already determined that immediate protection is necessary.
- **Aligns firearm surrender with the protective order itself**, recognizing that if the court finds sufficient risk to issue immediate protection, that same finding justifies immediate firearm compliance.
- **Creates clearer, more enforceable orders**, providing law enforcement with the information needed to determine whether additional steps are appropriate.
- **Improves clarity and compliance for respondents**, reducing confusion about legal obligations and how to lawfully surrender firearms.
- **Strengthens petitioner safety beyond the order itself** by requiring that petitioners receive information about safety planning and available support resources.
- **Establishes processes for accountability and verification**, enabling courts and law enforcement to confirm compliance and respond when surrender does not occur.

This bill does not expand the categories of individuals prohibited from possessing firearms. Instead, it ensures that existing protections operate as intended, during the moments when they are most likely to save lives.

## Conclusion

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<sup>5</sup> April M Zeoli, Alexander McCourt, Shani Buggs, Shannon Frattaroli, David Lilley, Daniel W Webster, Retracted: Analysis of the Strength of Legal Firearms Restrictions for Perpetrators of Domestic Violence and Their Associations With Intimate Partner Homicide, *American Journal of Epidemiology*, Volume 187, Issue 7, July 2018, Pages 1449–1455, <https://doi.org/10.1093/aje/kwx362>

[Domestic violence protective orders are effective in reducing homicides, study finds | University of Michigan News](#)



Protective orders are intended to save lives. They cannot do so if individuals who pose a known risk retain access to firearms during the most dangerous moments of domestic violence intervention.

By ensuring timely firearm surrender, clearer procedures, and meaningful accountability, SB 20 / HB 83 will better protect survivors, children, law enforcement, and the public.

**Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence urges a FAVORABLE report on SB 20 / HB 83.**

Thank you for your consideration.

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State	Temporary-order firearm prohibition (ETO/TRO)	Relinquishment required under restraining order	3rd-party surrender barred?*
Alabama	No	No	—
Alaska	No	No	—
Arizona	No	No	—
Arkansas	No	No	—
California	Yes	Yes	Yes
Colorado	Yes	Yes	No
Connecticut	Yes	Yes	Yes
Delaware	Yes	No	—
Florida	No	No	—
Georgia	No	No	—
Hawaii	Yes	Yes	Yes
Idaho	No	No	—
Illinois	Yes	Yes	No
Indiana	No	No	—



Iowa	No	Yes	No
Kansas	No	No	—
Kentucky	No	No	—
Louisiana	No	Yes	No
Maine	No	No	—
Maryland	No	Yes	Yes
Massachusetts	Yes	Yes	Yes
Michigan	No	No	—
Minnesota	No	Yes	No
Mississippi	No	No	—
Missouri	No	No	—
Montana	No	No	—
Nebraska	No	No	—
Nevada	No	No	—
New Hampshire	No	Yes	Yes
New Jersey	Yes	Yes	Yes
New Mexico	No	Yes	Yes
New York	Yes	Yes	Yes
North Carolina	Yes	Yes	Yes
North Dakota	No	No	—
Ohio	No	No	—
Oklahoma	No	No	—
Oregon	No	Yes	No



Pennsylvania	No	Yes	No
Rhode Island	No	Yes	Yes
South Carolina	No	No	—
South Dakota	No	No	—
Tennessee	No	Yes	No
Texas	Yes	No	—
Utah	No	No	—
Vermont	No	No	—
Virginia	No	Yes	No
Washington	Yes	Yes	Yes
West Virginia	Yes	No	—
Wisconsin	No	Yes	No
Wyoming	No	No	—

\*Only applicable where relinquishment is “Yes.” ([Everytown Research & Policy](#))