

Testimony in Support of House Bill 1417

Public Safety – Handgun Permit Requirement – Repeal (Maryland Constitutional Carry Act)

Chairman, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Galen Muhammad and I am a certified firearms instructor with credentials with USCCA, NRA and U2AC. I am also the chapter president of Onyx Sharpshooters out of Forestville, MD (Prince George's County).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 1417. HB 1417 would repeal the requirement that a law-abiding adult obtain a permit before wearing, carrying, or transporting a handgun in Maryland, while maintaining important safeguards such as prohibiting carrying while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

This legislation represents an important step toward restoring the constitutional rights of Maryland residents while maintaining public safety.

1. Protecting Fundamental Constitutional Rights

The right to keep and bear arms is explicitly protected by the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which states that *"the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."* The United States Supreme Court has repeatedly affirmed that this right applies to individual citizens and extends outside the home for lawful self-defense.

In *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008), the Court recognized that the Second Amendment protects an individual right to possess firearms for lawful purposes such as self-defense. Later, in *McDonald v. City of Chicago* (2010), the Court held that this right applies to the states through the Fourteenth Amendment.

Most recently, *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen* (2022) confirmed that the Second Amendment protects the right of ordinary law-abiding citizens to carry firearms in public for self-defense and rejected discretionary licensing schemes that burden that right. The Court emphasized that firearm regulations must be consistent with the Nation's historical tradition of firearm regulation.

HB 1417 brings Maryland law closer to the constitutional framework articulated in *Bruen* by removing the permit requirement that conditions the exercise of a fundamental right on government approval.

2. Aligning Maryland with the Majority of States

Across the United States, a growing number of states have adopted "constitutional carry" laws that allow law-abiding adults to carry firearms without first obtaining a permit. As of 2026, more than half of the states allow some form of permitless carry for eligible adults.

Maryland currently maintains one of the most restrictive handgun carry systems in the country. HB 1417 would align Maryland's policies more closely with those of other states while still allowing individuals to obtain permits if they wish for reciprocity or other purposes.

3. Removing Barriers for Law-Abiding Citizens

Permit systems impose financial and administrative burdens that disproportionately affect lower-income residents who may be most in need of lawful self-defense. Fees, training costs, and processing delays can prevent otherwise eligible citizens from exercising their constitutional rights.

HB 1417 restores equal access to the right of self-defense by ensuring that a fundamental right is not dependent on a person's ability to pay or navigate bureaucratic processes.

4. Maintaining Public Safety Safeguards

Importantly, HB 1417 does not eliminate prohibitions on dangerous behavior. The bill specifically maintains penalties for carrying a handgun while under the influence of alcohol or drugs and preserves existing restrictions on prohibited persons possessing firearms.

This balanced approach protects both constitutional rights and public safety.

5. Empowering Responsible Self-Defense

Law enforcement cannot be everywhere at once. Courts have long recognized that government generally has no legal duty to protect any specific individual from criminal attack. Therefore, the ability of citizens to lawfully defend themselves and their families is a critical component of personal safety.

Allowing responsible, law-abiding adults to carry firearms for self-defense recognizes this reality and affirms the principle that the right to self-defense is a fundamental liberty.

Conclusion

House Bill 1417 restores constitutional balance in Maryland by removing unnecessary barriers to the exercise of a fundamental right while preserving safeguards against misuse. By aligning Maryland law with Supreme Court precedent and with policies adopted across much of the country, this bill strengthens both civil liberties and responsible self-defense.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to give House Bill 1417 a favorable report.

Thank you for your time and consideration.