

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

**Institute for Legislative Action**

11250 WAPLES MILL ROAD

FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA 22030



**NRA**

March 11, 2026

National Rifle Association

11250 Waples Mill Road

Fairfax, VA 22030

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is John Weber and I represent the National Rifle Association and our members in Maryland. The NRA is opposed to House Bill 1608. This legislation imposes overly broad and punitive safe storage requirements on firearms, expanding beyond current child access prevention laws to mandate locked storage for all guns at all times unless carried or under direct control. While claiming to enhance safety, it introduces severe penalties that disproportionately impact well-meaning, law-abiding citizens rather than criminals. It creates traps for unintentional violations, eroding Second Amendment rights without demonstrable benefits to public safety.

Maryland's existing laws already require storage of loaded firearms with penalties. HB 1608 removes key qualifiers like "loaded" and expands to all firearms and unauthorized users, imposing mandatory locked storage in fire-resistant containers. This shift invites severe consequences for minor oversights, punishing individuals who have no intent to harm. For instance, consider a law-abiding gun owner who stores a disabled, unloaded heirloom firearm, perhaps a family relic from World War II, in an attic box for safekeeping. If a family member or visitor could theoretically access the attic without the owner's direct supervision, this could trigger a violation under the bill's broad "knows or should know" standard, leading to a misdemeanor charge and a \$500 fine on the first offense. Such examples highlight how the law criminalizes harmless, everyday scenarios rather than targeting deliberate negligence.

Additionally, the bill's tiered penalties escalate quickly. A second violation carries a \$1,000 fine, while a third prohibits the individual from possessing firearms, obtaining handgun qualification licenses, or securing wear-and-carry permits, effectively a lifetime ban for non-violent offenses. Criminals, who already disregard laws, will not comply with storage mandates, yet law-abiding citizens face these draconian outcomes, creating a chilling effect that discourages gun ownership among those who pose no threat.

Finally, adding layers of severe penalties for storage erodes the rights of Maryland's responsible gun owners without meaningfully impacting those who ignore the law. HB 1608 does not improve public safety but instead imposes harsh penalties that ensnare well-meaning individuals. For these reasons, the NRA respectfully urges the committee to oppose HB 1608.

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Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Weber". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

John Weber  
State Director  
NRA-ILA