

A LIFEBRIDGE HEALTH GROUP

CENTER FOR HOPE

Advancing hope, healing and resilience



April 1, 2026

House Judiciary Committee

SB775 – Public Safety – Gun Buyback Programs – Destruction of Firearms

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chairman Bartlett and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of LifeBridge Health and its Center for Hope, we strongly support Senate Bill 775.

Center for Hope's mission is to provide support, prevention, and intervention services to vulnerable populations, including survivors of child abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, and homicide.

Gun violence intersects directly with this mission. Firearms are now the leading cause of death among children and teens nationally, and Maryland communities continue to experience devastating losses tied to firearm access and misuse.

SB775 establishes a responsible statutory framework for gun buyback programs and, critically, requires the destruction of firearms and their component parts collected through those programs. This destruction requirement is essential. Without mandatory destruction, firearms or usable parts could be resold, redistributed, or re-enter circulation. The bill ensures that when a firearm is voluntarily removed from the community, that removal is permanent.

Reducing the number of firearms in circulation is a straightforward public safety strategy. Every firearm permanently removed represents one less weapon that can be used in a homicide, suicide, domestic violence incident, or unintentional shooting. In 2024, 78% of all homicides in Maryland involved firearms, and more than half of all suicides were firearm related. In the first months of 2026 alone, multiple unintentional shootings involving children accessing unsecured firearms have already occurred in our state. These tragedies are preventable.

Gun buyback programs are not a singular solution to gun violence. However, when implemented effectively and paired with other prevention strategies, they are a meaningful harm-reduction tool. Evidence from other jurisdictions demonstrates this potential impact. Australia's 1996 mandatory buyback program resulted in the collection of over 650,000 firearms and is widely credited with a sustained reduction in firearm deaths and mass shootings. In 2021, New Jersey collected more than 2,000 firearms in a single day as part of a broader public safety initiative. In Los Angeles, recurring buyback events have removed thousands of firearms from circulation.

Maryland has also seen tangible results. In August of last year, Baltimore City's third annual buyback event collected more than 400 firearms, bringing the total number removed since the program's inception to over 1,000. These voluntary, anonymous exchanges demonstrate that residents are willing to participate in community-based prevention efforts when given structured opportunities.

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Beyond direct firearm removal, buyback programs provide additional public health and public safety benefits:

- **Public Education:** Events frequently incorporate safe storage education and raise awareness about the risks of unsecured firearms, particularly in homes with children.
- **Community Engagement:** Buybacks foster cooperative engagement between residents and law enforcement, helping build trust and creating opportunities for broader violence prevention dialogue.
- **Cost-Effective Prevention:** Compared to many downstream interventions, buyback programs operate at low cost while potentially preventing high-cost medical, legal, and societal consequences associated with firearm injury and death.

For health systems like LifeBridge Health, gun violence is not an abstract policy issue; it is a daily clinical reality. We treat victims of firearm injury, support grieving families, and provide trauma-informed services to children and adults whose lives are permanently altered by gun violence. SB775 represents a pragmatic, preventative measure that aligns with public health principles and strengthens Maryland's commitment to reducing firearm-related harm.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 775.

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