
TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF BILL HB 126
Regulated Firearms – Seven-Day Waiting Period- Exceptions
Judiciary Committee
February 4, 2026

Social Work Advocates for Social Change strongly opposes HB 126, which would waive the state’s seven-day waiting period for firearm purchases for law enforcement officers, retired law enforcement officers in good standing, and individuals holding a concealed carry permit.

Waiting periods are designed to reduce harm during moments of acute emotional distress – something social workers help people through every day. As social workers, our profession is grounded in the values of dignity, worth of the person, and protection of human life. We, as a Social Work coalition, do not come from a general ideology; rather, we come with a perspective built on evidence-based practices, ethical responsibility, and stories from interactions with individuals and families who have lived through experiences of crisis. **Waiting periods for firearms operate on a simple but critical principle: *temporary crises should not result in permanent consequences.***

Firearm access during short-term crises significantly increases the risk of suicide and serious injury. 45% of all suicide deaths in Maryland since 2003 have used a firearm.¹ Suicidal and violent impulses are often transient, and brief delays can be lifesaving. A seven-day waiting period provides time for emotions to stabilize, support systems to intervene, and for individuals to reassess decisions made in moments of crisis. Importantly, waiting periods do not prevent lawful firearm ownership, rather they are temporary, non-punitive, and apply to all potential gun owners equally.

HB 126 proposes exemption to the waiting period based solely on professional status or permit holding – even though potentially grave crises know no such exemption. Law enforcement officers encounter an elevated risk to their mental health, especially during transitional periods, such as disciplinary action, internal investigations, injury leave, or retirement. The Department of Justice’s report on *Prevention of Death by Suicide in Law Enforcement* stated that law officers were more likely to die by suicide than to die in the line of duty.² Moreover, studies show firearm-related suicides make up 91.4 percent of all police suicides.³

The waiting period exists precisely because risk is not about *who* someone is, but *when* they are making the purchase. Creating exemptions shifts the law away from its evidence-based purpose and toward an assumption that some groups are less affected

by human vulnerability than others. That assumption is dangerous and not supported by public health experts or clinical understanding.

A concealed carry permit is a legal designation based on criminal history and statutory requirements: it does not and cannot evaluate a person’s emotional state, stress levels, or risk of experiencing a mental health crisis. Mental health is dynamic and situational. A person can be legally qualified to hold a permit and still experience moments of crisis, grief, or impaired judgment that elevate the risk for personal or public harm. Conflating legal status and emotional state misunderstands both mental health and public safety. The seven-day waiting period exists precisely to address this gap by responding to timing and circumstance, not solely legal status.

Public safety laws are most effective when they are clear, consistent, and applied equally. It was reported that when a state enacts a waiting period, firearm-related suicides fall by approximately 8.8%.⁴ Carving out exemptions weakens both the effectiveness and the credibility of the waiting period policy. This policy is modest, evidence-based, and rooted in the commitment to preserving life. It recognizes that mental health crises do not discriminate by profession, past service, or permit status, and prevention, therefore, must be universal.

Maintaining a consistent waiting period for all firearm purchasers is imperative and affirms the value of life, supports families and communities, and reflects a responsible, health-informed approach to public safety. **Social Work Advocates for Social Change urges an unfavorable report on HB 126.**

¹Department of Justice, August 2023. Recommendations Regarding the Prevention of Death by Suicide of Law Enforcement.

² Ibid

³ Violanti, J. M., Mnatsakanova, A., Burchfiel, C. M., Hartley, T. A., & Andrew, M. E. (2012). Police suicide in small departments: a comparative analysis. *International journal of emergency mental health*, 14(3), 157–162.

⁴ Arnold, G. E., & Priestley, M. B. (2025). Do Gun-Purchase Waiting Periods Save Lives?. *Health economics*, 34(8), 1461–1473. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hec.4970>