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The Honorable Sandy Bartlett
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Bartlett and Committee Members:

The Maryland State's Attorneys' Association (MSAA) offers this written testimony in support of House Bill 83—Family and Law Enforcement Protection Act. I am the Chief of the Special Victims' Division for the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office, and co-chair, along with Deputy State's Attorney for Frederick County Joyce King, of the Maryland State's Attorney Association's Special Victims Legislative Committee. In my capacity as the Chief of SVD, I supervise and handle prosecutions related to domestic violence, including homicides, protective order violations, assaults, and firearms violations. I also chair the Montgomery County Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee.

In 2024, 32 Maryland domestic violence victims of domestic violence were killed by an abusive current or ex-spouse or a current or ex-boyfriend. In 63% of those cases, the offender used a firearm. In 41% of those cases, the victim was in the process of leaving their spouse or boyfriend. Victims may seek a protective order at the time they are leaving their spouse or boyfriend.

There are current gaps in our law related to firearm surrender and protective order. House Bill 83 seeks to close those gaps. We would like to highlight several of the proposed changes to the law. Specifically, the proposed addition to Section 4-505 of the Family Law Article, which mandates that the temporary protective order shall order the respondent to surrender any firearm in their possession and any handgun license or permit to law enforcement authorities, will directly reduce the lethal risk to a victim seeking a protective order. The proposed additions to sections 4-506 and 4-506.1 set forth requirements not only to surrender firearms, but also handgun licenses and permits, and set up a 24 hour timeline for such surrender. Moreover, the proposed additions authorize local law enforcement to seek a search warrant to remove firearms (like our extreme risk protective order laws). Establishing a timeline for firearms surrender, including handgun license and permits, and creating authority for search warrants, all enhance victim safety and decrease lethality risks.

The MSAA urges this Committee to issue a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Debbie Feinstein", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Debbie Feinstein
Co-Chair, MSSA Special Victims Subcommittee