

**TESTIMONY OF ROBERT BAJEFSKY,
A MEMBER OF THE HANDGUN ROSTER BOARD,
ON FEBRUARY 25, 2026
BEFORE THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1339, HANDGUN ROSTER REFORM**

I am a member of the Handgun Roster Board, serving as the representative of an organization that advocates against handgun violence.¹ I have been a member since 2021. For the reasons explained below, I support HB 1339 as a necessary improvement over the current system for determining which handguns should be approved for sale in Maryland.

I am a retired attorney who practiced in the field of patent law for over 40 years.

I do not recall receiving any training or instructions when I joined the board. I conducted my own research to learn it's duties and procedures. I also conducted legal research to learn about Maryland law that might have relevance to my duties as a board member. This included such mundane items as the definitions of handgun, rifle, and short-barreled rifle. While conducting that research, I stumbled upon the statute that prohibited dealers from selling a handgun "unless the handgun has an integrated mechanical safety device."² Finally, I also looked into the law relating to assault weapons, which cannot be sold in Maryland.³

I believe how the board dealt with these last two issues demonstrates the need for the changes in the handgun approval process contained in HB 1339.

At the time that the "integrated safety device" requirement became law, I believe that the legislators thought that manufactures would incorporate such safety devices in the handguns they sought to sell. Because that did not happen, the board was presented with a difficult problem. It could either reject virtually all of the petitions it received or ignore the law. I do not know

¹ MD Pub Safety Code §5-404(b)(v).

² MD Pub Safety Code §5-132(c)(2).

³ MD Criminal Law Code §4-303(a).

how or when the board made its decision; it happened before I joined. By the time I became a member, the board had decided to treat an “external safety lock” as the equivalent of the statutorily required “integrated mechanical safety device.”⁴ This interpretation is clearly inconsistent with the language of the statute, which unquestionably distinguishes between the “integrated” and the “external.”⁵ I understand that following the law would require the board to reject almost all petitions, a clearly undesirable result. But the board should have informed the legislature of the problem the current law created and asked that body to amend the law. To my knowledge, this never happened.

The board’s treatment of potential assault weapons also demonstrates why the procedures of HB 1339 are necessary. Each quarter the board receives several petitions seeking approval of so-called pistols having stabilizer braces. These “braces” allegedly permit firing the weapon with one hand, as if it in fact is a pistol. But evidence presented to the board demonstrated that the brace was in fact a stock and the weapon was routinely fired from the shoulder, making it a short-barreled rifle. In which case, the firearm may be considered an assault weapon that cannot be sold in Maryland.⁶ During my time on the board, the vast majority of evidence established that these weapons are almost always fired from the shoulder. Notwithstanding this evidence and a statutory requirement that the petitioner has the burden of proof,⁷ the board continues to assert that these firearms are not designed to be fired from the shoulder. A new fact finding process is clearly necessary.

HB 1339 provides that new process. The committee should favorably report this bill.

⁴ The statute defines an external safety lock as “an external device that is: (a) attached to a handgun with a key or combination lock” MD Safety Code §5-132(a)(3)(i). In contrast, the code defines the integrated device as one that is “built into a handgun” *Id.* §5-132(a)(6).

⁵ See also *Id.* §5-132(c)(1) (“A dealer may not sell . . . in the State a handgun manufactured on or before December 31, 2002, unless the handgun is sold . . . with an external safety lock.”) and §5-132(c)(2) (“a dealer may not sell . . . in the State a handgun manufactured on or after January 1, 2003, unless the handgun has an integrated mechanical safety device”).

⁶ MD Criminal Code §4-303(a).

⁷ MD Pub Safety Code §5-405(c)(4); see also *id.* §5-405(d)(3)(iii).

