

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

**Institute for Legislative Action**

11250 WAPLES MILL ROAD

FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA 22030



**NRA**

March 2, 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 197. This legislation imposes an 11% excise tax on gross receipts from sales of firearms, firearm accessories, and ammunition, creating unnecessary financial burdens on law-abiding gun owners, substantial economic challenges for dealers, and no demonstrable public safety benefit while funding programs that do little to address the root causes of violence.

First, Maryland already has robust tools to promote community safety without punitive taxes on constitutional rights. Law-abiding citizens responsibly exercise their Second Amendment freedoms, and existing laws, including background checks and regulations on prohibited persons, effectively target criminal misuse of firearms. HB 197 ignores these measures and assumes a broad tax is needed, despite lacking evidence that taxing legal sales reduces crime. The bill's revenue allocation to various funds, such as violence intervention programs, is based on speculative benefits, with no local data showing that similar taxes elsewhere have meaningfully decreased violence.

Second, the bill creates a complex and costly bureaucracy that disproportionately affects everyday gun owners and small businesses rather than criminals. It requires federally licensed dealers to file monthly returns, maintain detailed records, and navigate vague thresholds for out-of-state sales, inviting disputes, audits, and uneven enforcement. The 11% tax will increase costs for firearms and accessories, which are often 20-50% higher after markup, making self-defense tools, hunting equipment, and recreational shooting less affordable—particularly for low-income families and rural residents. Small dealers, especially those not classified as "large retailers," face delayed implementation but still risk closure due to reduced sales volume, while consumers may turn to unregulated black markets.

Third, HB 197 overlooks practical enforcement problems and risks unintended consequences. Requiring the Comptroller to administer the tax, assess penalties, and distribute funds diverts resources from actual crime prevention to paperwork and collections. The bill's exceptions for law enforcement are narrow, and the tax could discourage participation in shooting sports, hunter education, and safe storage practices by raising barriers to entry. Firearm ownership for protection could decline if costs rise, leaving vulnerable populations at greater risk, while wildlife management suffers if hunters reduce activity due to pricier ammunition.

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Finally, by imposing a tax based on overstated safety concerns, HB 197 erodes gun owners' rights and traditions without proportional benefits. Maryland's existing public safety initiatives, including grants and education programs, already address trauma and prevention through proven methods. This bill magnifies ideological agendas while ignoring solutions like enforcing current laws against criminals and providing incentives for voluntary safety measures.

In closing, Maryland has effective public safety tools through existing regulations, voluntary programs, and law enforcement. HB 197 does not meaningfully enhance those tools. For these reasons, NRA respectfully urges the committee to oppose House Bill 197.

Thank you for your consideration.

John Weber State Director NRA-ILA

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Weber". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Weber  
State Director  
NRA-ILA