

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2021 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 221 (Senator Bailey)
Judicial Proceedings

Handgun Qualification License - Firearms Safety Training

This bill repeals the requirement that a firearms safety training course for a Handgun Qualification License (HQL) include a firearms orientation component that demonstrates the person's safe operation and handling of a firearm.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The change is procedural in nature and does not directly affect governmental finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: An HQL authorizes a person to purchase, rent, or receive a handgun. Generally, the Secretary of State Police must issue an HQL to a person who (1) is at least age 21; (2) is a State resident; (3) has completed a firearms safety training course; and (4) is not prohibited by federal or State law from purchasing or possessing a handgun.

The firearms safety training course must include (1) a minimum of four hours of instruction by a qualified handgun instructor; (2) classroom instruction on State firearm law, home firearm safety, and handgun mechanisms and operation; and (3) a firearms orientation component that demonstrates that the person can safely operate and handle a firearm.

Current law requirements and background relating to the issuance of an HQL is summarized in the **Appendix – Handgun Qualification License Requirements – Current Law/Background.**

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: SB 881 of 2020 received a hearing in the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, but no further action was taken.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of State Police; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 28, 2021
rh/lgc

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Appendix

Handgun Qualification License Requirements – Current Law/Background

A handgun qualification license (HQL) authorizes a person to purchase, rent, or receive a handgun. A licensed firearms manufacturer; a specified active or retired law enforcement officer; a member or retired member of the U.S. Armed Forces or the National Guard; and a person purchasing, renting, or receiving an antique, curio, or relic firearm (as defined under federal law) are exempt from the requirements of the licensing provisions.

The Secretary of State Police must apply for a State and national criminal history records check for each applicant. As part of the application for a criminal history records check, the Secretary must submit one complete set of fingerprints of the applicant.

The application fee for an HQL is to cover administrative costs and may be up to \$50. The term of the license is 10 years. License renewal fees are set at up to \$20. Generally, the Secretary of State Police must issue an HQL to a person who (1) is at least 21 years old; (2) is a State resident; (3) has completed a firearms safety training course; and (4) is not prohibited by federal or State law from purchasing or possessing a handgun.

The firearms safety training course must include (1) a minimum of four hours of instruction by a qualified handgun instructor; (2) classroom instruction on State firearm law, home firearm safety, and handgun mechanisms and operation; and (3) a firearms orientation that demonstrates that the person can safely operate and handle a firearm. An applicant is not required to complete an approved firearms safety training course if the applicant has previously completed a certified firearms training course, has completed a hunting safety course prescribed by the Department of Natural Resources, is currently a qualified handgun instructor, is an honorably discharged member of the U.S. Armed Forces or the National Guard, is a certain employee of an armored car company, or lawfully owns a regulated firearm. Renewal applicants are not required to complete the firearms safety training course or submit to a State and national criminal history records check.

The Secretary may issue an HQL without an additional application or fee to a person who meets the requirements for the issuance of a handgun permit who does not already have an HQL.

Within 30 days after receiving a properly completed HQL application, the Secretary must provide (1) an HQL, if approved, or (2) a written denial of the application, including the reason the application was denied and a statement of the applicant's appeal rights regarding the decision.

In 2020, the Department of State Police (DSP) received 66,526 new applications for HQLs. DSP denied 2,118 applications in the same year. There are currently approximately 192,506 active HQLs in the State (issued since October 1, 2013).