

Written Testimony of Jesse Ferguson, resident of Caroline County, Maryland, in Opposition to HB 4

I am a hard-working husband, father of two young girls, and a native of Maryland's Eastern Shore. I am also an avid hunter, firearms collector, and participant in all manners of competition involving shooting and firearms. I am opposed to HB 4 because it criminalizes, and severely punishes, activities which do not harm the general public in any way. This bill is a solution in search of a problem. This bill should be recognized by the committee members for what it truly is, an effort to make criminals of law-abiding citizens while trampling their rights in the Constitution as well as the rights to their property. Property (rifles/shotguns) which is very seldom used in crime! Requiring background checks beyond what is currently required by federal law does absolutely nothing to promote public safety!

In my many years of being involved in the collecting of firearms, hunting with firearms, and engaging in shooting competitions with firearms, I have loaned, been loaned, sold, traded, and purchased rifles and shotguns from family members, friends, fellow hunters, and competition shooters. This is a very common occurrence but under HB 4 this activity would become a violation of Maryland law and punishable by "*imprisonment not exceeding 5 years or a fine not exceeding \$10,000 or both*". To comply with the law would add significant additional cost and burden to private citizens. Trades of equally valued firearms which would normally incur no cost to either party would now require payment for two background checks. Loans of firearms would incur similar costs for two background checks: one on transfer to the loanee, one on return to the loaner. Additional effort required to locate and travel to the place of business of a licensee that is willing to perform the transfer between two private parties only creates further burden. I am not sure a licensee can even conduct a background check for a transfer such as a loan.

HB 4 also targets a specific class of firearms that is statistically very rarely used in crime.

According to FBI data for the year 2017 (<https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2017/crime-in-the->

[u.s.-2017/tables/table-20](#)) rifles and shotguns were used the state of Maryland a combined 8 times to commit murder. Handguns, which are more heavily regulated in Maryland, were used 339 times. The numbers are similar for nearly every year one chooses to examine, and not only for Maryland, but for any state in the U.S. Not only that, but other weapons such as knives and even hands and feet are used to commit murders on a larger scale than rifles and shotguns. Again, this bill is a solution to a problem that does not exist.

I cannot fathom what problem is trying to be solved by this bill and I don't understand the message being sent to citizens of the state of Maryland by the author or any legislator that would support this bill. We have had an annual murder rate in Baltimore city that has exceeded 300 deaths per year for the past 4 years! The overwhelming majority of these murders were committed with handguns which, in Maryland, already require a background check for any transfer as well as a 7-day waiting period. These laws do not deter criminal use of handguns that result in such tragically high numbers of murders! Why are we even discussing a bill such as HB 4 in light of the other pressing problems being faced by residents of this state?

Sincerely,

Jesse Ferguson

jessebferguson@gmail.com