

January 15th 2020

Robert Van Rens

HB-4 Public Safety- Rifles and Shotguns- Secondary Transactions- Support

House Judiciary Committee

Luke Clippinger, Chair

Vanessa Atterbeary, Vice Chair

Chair Clippinger and Members of the Committee,

My name is Robert Van Rens. I am veteran and a gun owner. In 2010 I became an NRA handgun, rifle, and shotgun safety instructor, then resigned my membership and my certification in 2013 in protest at the way the NRA responded to the mass shooting at Sandy Hook. Until my health interfered, I was an avid hunter. I grew up in a part of the country where guns and hunting were ubiquitous and I have been around them since I was a child. I was taught and continue to teach responsible and safe use of firearms.

Firearms are weapons, uniquely dangerous tools, designed to kill or injure, and all other applications are secondary uses.

As a safety instructor, it was my job to ensure that my students understood the importance of safe gun-handling skills. I encouraged them to practice regularly and to always keep in mind that any firearm was ultimately a weapon and could be deadly. Before transferring possession of any gun, it is reasonable that the transferee undergoes a thorough background examination—after all, this is already mandated under Maryland law prior to purchase for some types of firearms.

We already balance our constitutionally mandated freedoms to bear arms with a reasonable system of background checks and other reasonable regulations of firearms sales and transfers. As a society we acknowledge the need to bar possession of firearms from those convicted of felonies, those who have committed domestic abuse and other crimes of violence, and persons suffering from dangerous mental illness. Yet it is currently possible for anyone at all to readily acquire non-regulated firearms from a private party with no check whatsoever. I urge you to adopt this simple, commonsense reform to Maryland's firearm regulations. It will not impede legal, legitimate transfers, but it will prevent someone who should have access to guns from coming into possession of one.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Robert Van Rens.