

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF SB816 AND HB1257

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PARSONSBURG, MD

I'm here today to testify on position and opposition to HB1257. I am a Maryland gunshop owner, volunteer deputy fire chief (of which I have served for 26 years as a volunteer) and avid outdoorsmen. The safety and well-being of my family and community are my responsibility everyday and I choose to involve myself in every level of being a community leader because in my opinion that's what being an American is all about.

The state of Maryland currently has some of the most strict gun laws to date in the United States, yet AGAIN and AGAIN Baltimore's' crime rate per capita has obtained the #4 most dangerous city rating already in 2020. I'm sure you have heard this same argument time and time again in opposition of all the proposed gun legislation, yet you continue to go after the law abiding citizen and refuse to back the governor's proposed signature legislation on gun offenses whereas criminals use a firearm in the commission of a crime or illegal possession of a firearm. Factual data should be your driving force, the safety of the community you represent should be your driving force. The Firearm Safety Act does not further protect the community, or at least the community I live in, it simply adds thousands if not tens of thousands of dollars in fees and additional security costs to the shop owner. I venture to say that over 70% of the gun shops in the state of Maryland are very small privately/ family owned and operated businesses that could not afford to take on an extra electric bill let alone these ridiculous demands for additional security, 24 hour audio and video surveillance, electronic record keeping, and the threat of jail time if any of your new rules are accidentally not adhered to. I know I speak for many of the mom and pop type gun shops when I say these new laws would absolutely shut down our businesses and for a lot of us that means we could lose our homes and property. What happen to sense of community politics- why not form a committee to speak to the gun shop owners and possibly agree upon certain procedures, forcing us out of business is just not fair.

Lets talk about the person's right to privacy! I do not feel it is appropriate to visually and audio record any customer in my shop and I have researched multiple federal and state laws that are fairly straight forward in their understanding. This opens the gun shop up to law suits for illegal wiretapping and is an absolute invasion on all of our privacy. Federal and state laws already mandate background checks and record keeping which have never come into question so I ask the question of why? Outside of blatant disregard for the 2nd amendment and our privacy can anyone name some specifics on how this bill will help curve the crime rate or violence in our

state. It's pretty obvious this is an attempt to raise the costs of firearms to the consumer and the total costs of being licensed in the state to sell firearms so that all of us privately owned mom and pop shops have to shut down. If this was not the case there would be provisions listed in the legislation to assist us with funds to become compliant.

Lastly, I want to address the \$2 million dollar insurance portion of this bill. My shop is located on the eastern shore and we have a huge following with hunting, sport shooting and for obvious reasons personal protection. I have been in business just shy of 5 years, my very small gun shop also caters to the local fire department's and non-profit organizations for their largest fundraisers each year which happen to be firearm related. I know for a fact that several mom and pop gun shops do this same service all over the shore for multiple volunteer fire companies. Currently we have no large chain stores that sell firearms or are willing to help these organizations with their fundraisers so I agreed to be that person. I actively searched for a couple years to find an affordable insurance company to cover the replacement costs of the approximate 120 firearms they giveaway each year. NONE, I repeat NONE of the usual commercially available insurance companies would include firearms coverage. Eventually you learn that there is small circle of insurance companies that offer coverage and it for me was beyond reasonable in costs. There is no way the shop should be responsible for someone else's actions as long as that person passes a background check! The state of Maryland refuses to except responsibility when completing a background check and even words their response to include "NOT DISSAPROVED" so that they cannot be sued for approving a background check. Do we hold the car lot owner responsible for damages or criminal liability when someone is killed in a car accident or the hardware store owner for deaths by hammers which by the way is a considerably higher number than persons killed with legally purchased firearms.

I beg each of you to vote this bill down, it's a horrible bill and will only help those with an agenda to close the majority of the gun shops in the state. Lets be reasonable and work together, this just divides us further.

Respectfully,

Vance Webster Jr.