

**Testimony for the House Ways & Means Committee
February 2, 2021**

SB 10 – Election Law-Polling Sites- Firearms Prohibition

FAVORABLE

To Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Committee members,

My name is Melissa Ladd. I am a volunteer with Maryland Moms Demand Action, and I live in Olney, Maryland. I am formally submitting my written testimony in support of SB 10 on Firearms Prohibition at Polling Sites.

As you know, Maryland currently allows the open carry of a handgun by a person with a permit to wear, carry, or transport a gun.¹ The open carry of rifles and shotguns is unregulated under state law. We also know that it is permissible for the Maryland State Police to limit the geographic area, circumstances or times in which a handgun carry permit is effective,² but there are no such legal avenues to restrict the open carry of rifles and shotguns. I believe that firearms of all types, whether carried openly or concealed should be prohibited from polling places.

The right to vote is the most fundamental right afforded to citizens of a free country. Voter intimidation is a crime under federal law and under state law in Maryland. The United States Supreme Court wrote “the display of a gun instills fear in the average citizen.”³ Firearms in such polling places act as a tool of intimidation and embolden extremists.

The Maryland General Assembly should act now to ensure that no voter is fearful or intimidated when exercising their most fundamental democratic right. In the current divisive times, it is crucial that we provide security to all participating in elections. By enacting SB 10, the General Assembly will eliminate the potential for terror and intimidation, and ensure dialogue and debate can ensue instead.

Sincerely,
Melissa Ladd
State Legislative Lead
Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, Maryland Chapter

¹ Md. Code Ann., Crim. Law § 4-203(a), (b)(2)

² Md. Code Ann., Pub. Safety § 5-307(b)

³ **McLaughlin v. United States, 476 U.S. 16, 17-18 (1986)**