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*Written Testimony of Katie Novotny in Support of SB560*

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February 15, 2021

I am a member of Multiple Gun Rights organizations. Maryland Shall Issue, Associated Gun Clubs, Maryland State Rifle and Pistol Association, and the National Rifle Association. I am a certified Range Safety Officer with the NRA. I compete in multiple shooting events such as Steel Challenge, 3-gun, small bore, and vintage military rifle matches. I am an avid firearms collector. I support SB560.

Under current law, the theft of a handgun or any firearm is treated as simple theft, generally in the \$100-\$1,500 category. The penalty for this is only up to 6 months imprisonment and/or a fine of \$500 for a first offense, and up to 1 year and/or \$500 fine for second or subsequent convictions. Therefore, stealing a firearm does not make a person a prohibited person for future lawful firearms purchases. I think that most would agree that stealing a firearm should prohibit a person from lawfully purchasing a firearm in the future. It takes four CONVICTIONS in this category before the penalty is enough to make a person prohibited. First and second offenses are often not even prosecuted. Misdemeanors with small penalties are often not pursued by prosecutors. Instead, the guns are displayed proudly on the department's social media accounts as a "look what we got off the streets", with virtually no penalties for the thief.

I believe it is common sense that the theft of a firearm should be a separate crime than theft of property or services. Any theft is bad, but theft of a handgun, or any firearm is especially egregious. The only reason anyone would steal a firearm would be for nefarious purposes. The punishment must match the seriousness of the crime. With the current state of affairs with murders by handguns in this state, an increased penalty is in order.

I am not opposed to making the penalty a misdemeanor with the same sentence for a first offense rather than a felony. The bottom line is that laws for stealing firearms must have teeth, and they must be prosecuted. People who steal firearms MUST be held responsible and MUST be punished more harshly than an otherwise law abiding citizen who innocently runs afoul of one of the myriad of gun laws in this state, particularly ones that have or will change very recently.

Because of these reasons above, I request a favorable report.

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