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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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The Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Senate Bill 826 Handgun Permits – Qualifications – High-Risk Occupations
Statement of Support by Bill Sponsor Senator Mary Beth Carozza

Thank you, Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee for this opportunity to present and request your support on **Senate Bill 826 Handgun Permits – Qualifications – High-Risk Occupations**. This allows a handgun permit to be issued based on specified high-risk occupations including a correctional officer, a parole and probation officer, a firefighter, an emergency medical technician, a rescue squad member, a security guard for a church or religious organization, a physician, a physician’s assistant, a nurse, or a nurse practitioner.

Current law permits that an applicant for a handgun permit must, among other requirements, have a good and substantial reason to wear, carry, or transport a handgun. “Good and substantial reason” includes a finding that the permit is necessary as a reasonable precaution against apprehended danger. Senate Bill 826 would permit specified high-risk occupations to be included as a sufficient reason to hold a hand-gun permit.

This legislation is essential for our public servants and first responders as it gives them security and the ability to protect themselves in the high-risk environments they face on a daily basis.

We expect and sometimes take for granted that our first responders and other high-risk public safety professionals will be there for us, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. When they are called into action, whether at their workplace or on the scene, our front-line responders put themselves in a position to assist in so many different scenarios. They go into drug and criminal areas to respond to the call, and they have faced violent acts on the scene of an overdose or someone coming out of a seizure, or angry and disgruntled family members who sometimes lash out in violence when they lose a loved one. Our front-line workers, our heroes, put themselves in harm’s way, in life-threatening situations, each and every day.

The high-risk occupations set forth in this bill fully satisfy the Maryland State Police's existing requirements for an "assumed risk" position. These front-line heroes should not have to actually suffer an attack or prove actual, documented threats in order to secure a permit for personal protection. We should support our front-line public safety professionals working for us in these high-risk occupations and allow them to protect themselves.

My panel today, you will hear from some of these high-risk occupations that will explain why this legislation is important to their physical safety while being in a high-risk environment on a day-to-day basis.

I believe this is a reasonable request given the potential harm these high-risk occupations face to protect and serve our communities. I respectfully ask my colleagues on the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee for a favorable report of Senate Bill 826.

Thank you for your kind consideration.