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TO: The Honorable Will Smith Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Hannibal G. Williams II Kemerer
Chief Counsel, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

RE: SB0086 – Rifles and Shotguns – Possession – Age Requirement (Raise the Age Act of 2023) (Support)

The Office of Attorney General supports SB 86, Senator Waldstreicher's legislation to require persons who possess rifles and shotguns to be at least 21 years of age, except under certain circumstances.

Senate Bill 86 adds a disqualifier to the possession of rifles and shotguns by making it illegal for someone under 21 to possess a rifle or shotgun. There is currently no age requirement for possession of shotguns and rifles, but regulated firearms like handguns currently have the "must be 21" language. The bill creates many exceptions, such as 1) if the youth are possessing the rifle or shotgun for self-defense in their home or a home where they are an invited guest ;or 2) if they are supervised by a person 21 years or older who is not disqualified from possessing firearms and the youth have their parent's permission (presumably for hunters). Senate Bill 86 also makes it a crime to give or lend a rifle or shotgun to someone under 21, unless the gift or loaner fits one of these enumerated exceptions.

We believe that it is generally sound public policy to create parity between the way we treat regulated firearms vs. rifles and shotguns. Therefore, the Office of the Attorney General urges the Committee to favorably report SB 86.

cc: Committee Members

This bill letter is a statement of the Office of Attorney General's policy position on the referenced pending legislation. For a legal or constitutional analysis of the bill, Members of the House and Senate should consult with the Counsel to the General Assembly, Sandy Brantley. She can be reached at 410-946-5600 or sbrantley@oag.state.md.us