
WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF KATIE NOVOTNY IN OPPOSITION OF
HB580

February 21, 2023

I am a law abiding gun owner, advocate for the right to self-defense, certified range safety officer, and a competitor in firearms competition. I oppose HB580.

This bill bans possession or carrying of a firearm at and within 100 feet of a polling place. Under the Bruen decision, restrictions **outside** of prohibited places are not allowed. They are limited to **inside** such locations. In many locations, this would impact someone walking down the street or driving down the road. It also may force a Handgun Permit holder to secure their firearm in their vehicle in some distant location, where it is more susceptible to theft. Additionally, it places people who are the victim of stalking and harassment at risk since they would be forced to disarm a distance from the polling place, a fact their harasser would know, and could take advantage of. Without the 100 feet requirement, a person would more easily be able to park in a more visible, occupied location prior to entering the polling place, possibly offering some greater level of visibility and perhaps security.

This bill does not require armed, or even unarmed security, to guarantee the safety of those at polling places. Instead, it leaves the safety of all in the hands of election judges who must rely upon calling the police. Gun Free Zones are known favored targets for armed attacks. Furthermore, those who do regularly carry a firearm, may be required to leave it in their vehicle, parked an appropriate distance from the polling location, making it a target for theft, rather than safely on their person. If they instead choose to leave it at home, these people with known enhanced risk are then vulnerable while traveling to, from, and within, the polling location.

It is already illegal to participate in intimidation tactics at a polling place, and intimidating acts with a firearm would certainly fall under this umbrella, making this bill unnecessary. Furthermore, attempts at voter intimidation are very rare in Maryland. The Baltimore Sun article (<https://www.baltimoresun.com/politics/bs-md-pol-few-incidents-of-voter-intimidation-20201211-62xuahitendlbdz7nu2svqcscy-story.html>) dated December 11, 2020 titled “Few Incidents of Voter Intimidation or Harassment Reported in Maryland” even emphasizes this. This article reports only 27 complaints of possible voter intimidation or harassment. Of the examples given, none involved firearms. The biggest threat seemed to be from misleading robocalls. Denying those who have passed Maryland’s incredibly rigorous wear and carry permitting process the right to carry at a polling place is completely unnecessary. If a person is carrying

concealed, no one else will be aware, and therefore cannot be intimidated. The mere possibility of a person lawfully carrying a concealed firearm is not a threat, nor should it be intimidating. Everyday these people are in line behind you at the grocery store, the dry cleaners, and other everyday places, with no negative outcomes. Polling places are no different.

This bill is unnecessary. It unfairly targets lawful gun owners, while doing nothing to address real sources of voter intimidation or harassment. Because of these reasons above, I request an unfavorable report.

Respectfully,

Katie Novotny

District 35A

Katie.novotny@hotmail.com

443-617-7568