



**HB 935**  
**Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act**

***UNFAVORABLE***

The Maryland State Rifle & Pistol Association (MSRPA) opposes HB 935 the Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act.

This bill would raise additional taxes on firearm and ammunition manufacturers and dealers to fund the state's trauma systems. The Maryland Trauma Physician Services Fund is maintained through a \$5 surcharge on car registration renewals. It covers costs for uncompensated care, Medicaid-enrolled patients, and trauma related expenses and equipment grants. Income from vehicle registration fees, grants and reserves have subsidized the fund and will preserve the trauma system, but not for more than a few more years. The Maryland Health Care Commission recommended that the registration fee be raised to \$6, the better to support the network, as fees have not been raised since the early 2000s. However, Delegate Mireku-North has instead decided that lawful gun owners and the companies that make and sell the products those gun owners buy should be taxed even more.

There are problems with this proposal, including:

- We don't tax any other constitutional rights. This tax would infringe on law-abiding citizens' rights and abilities to self-defense, while doing little to address violent crime.
- Maryland has few firearm or ammunition manufacturers in the state, so how will the excise tax raise the estimated \$13 million additional funds needed, if there aren't a lot of companies to tax in the first place?
- Why should the average citizen be concerned about raising taxes on companies? The dirty little secret is that a tax on businesses is a tax on customers. Companies will not eat the costs of additional taxes, because they always pass them on to the consumer.
- At a press conference on January 17<sup>th</sup> Delegate Bernice Mireku-North (Montgomery) stated that the taxes would "come from firearms associated with mass shootings, which burden the state's trauma systems." Senator Sarah Elfreth (Anne Arundel) said the state's shock trauma center in Baltimore experienced an increase of patients of gunshot wounds from 5% in 2013 to 10% last year. So, it appears that the law abiding, tax paying citizens of Maryland will once again, bear the burden of violent criminals who did not pay taxes on the guns and ammunition that were probably stolen in the first place.

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Do not equate this proposed additional excise tax with the Pittman-Robertson Excise Tax. The Pittman-Robertson Act, signed into law by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1937, imposes an 11 percent tax on the wholesale price of rifles, shotguns, and ammunition, as well as a 10 percent tax on handguns. States utilize their Pittman-Robertson funds to restore, manage, and enhance wildlife habitat for various species, including pheasants, quail, waterfowl, deer, and elk. Additionally, these funds support public access to wildlife resources and hunter education programs. Over the 86 years since its establishment, the service has distributed more than \$25 billion for state conservation and public access projects. The Pittman-Robertson Act remains one of the most successful models of conservation funding in the United States, with sportsmen and women voluntarily contributing to the improvement of local wildlife habitat for generations to come.

Marylanders will probably reduce their spending on equipment for hunting, sport shooting and training because of increased taxes. Will Maryland businesses be able to stay competitive with the companies in neighboring states - Delaware, Virginia, and West Virginia?

Is Delegate Mireku-North considering the effects on medical care for the needy and Maryland's economy, or is this really all about gun control?

The MSRPA respectfully requests an UNFAVORABLE report on HB 935.

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The MSRPA is the official National Rifle Association state organization for Maryland. The MSRPA's mission is to defend our rights in Maryland, support training in firearm safety and shooting skills through its affiliated clubs, and sponsor and sanction local competition throughout the state.