

BILL NO: House Bill 935
TITLE: Comprehensive Community Safety Funding Act
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
HEARING DATE: February 22, 2024
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

House Bill 935 would impose an excise tax on certain firearms dealers based on gross receipts of sales of firearms, certain accessories, and ammunition. The Women's Law Center of Maryland (WLC) supports HB 935 as a reasonable way to involve gun sales with the extreme trauma and violence caused by guns in our state.

Of the 37 domestic violence related deaths in Maryland in 2023, 73% were caused by guns. Higher rates of firearm ownership correlate to a higher rate of domestic violence homicide according to a 2019 study¹. There is a 65% higher incidence rate of domestic firearm homicide in the states with the highest firearm ownership compared to states with lower ownership rates². Since women are the most common victims of domestic violence homicide, they are most at risk with increased gun ownership³. The risk of homicide for women increases by 500% with the presence of a gun in the home⁴.

The WLC has had clients murdered by their abusers using a gun. The most recent was in September 2023. The consequences of this are still happening to the now motherless 6-year-old in the case.

Under HB 935, after administrative costs, proceeds would be distributed to a variety of organizations and centers that are required to deal with the fallout from gun violence. See page 4, lines 24-25 through page 5, lines 1-8. This funding would supplement, not supplant, any other funding for these places. In effect, the revenue from this excise tax will go directly to places that daily experience the trauma caused by gun use.

Therefore, the Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc. urges a favorable report on House Bill 935.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, membership organization that serves as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women. It advocates for the rights of women through legal assistance to individuals and strategic initiatives to achieve systemic change.

¹ Kivisto, A.J., Magee, L.A., Phalen, P.L., Ray, B.R. (2019). Firearm ownership and domestic versus nondomestic homicide in the U.S. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, Abstract:
[https://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797\(19\)30197-7/fulltext#articleInformation](https://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797(19)30197-7/fulltext#articleInformation)

² Merovsh, Sarah. "Gun Ownership Rates Tied to Domestic Homicides, but Not Other Killings, Study Finds," NY Times, (July 22, 2019) <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/22/us/gun-ownership-violence-statistics.html>

³ Id.

⁴ The National Domestic Violence Hotline, Retrieved 1/29/21, <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/safety-planning-around-guns-and-firearms/>.