



Maryland Citizens Defense League



P.O. Box 2035
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March 12, 2002

HB 318 - Firearms Offenses - Project Exile

The Honorable Joseph F. Vallario, Jr.
Chairman, House Judiciary Committee
Low House Office Building, Room 121
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Dear Chairman Vallario,

While the Maryland Citizens Defense League (MCDL) CONDITIONALLY SUPPORTS this Bill.

While we typically support Delegate Amedori and the other pro-Self Defense and pro-Second Amendment Delegates, we have concerns which we feel need to be addressed in connection with this Bill.

Basically what guarantees are there that an out-of-control Attorney General, certain States Attorneys, certain Maryland State and local police officers, and certain left-wing judges (with the wide discretion as they have in Maryland), will not use the tough provisions of HB 318 against typically law-abiding citizens who may be found to have committed some technical violation of law according to an out-of-control Attorney General? We are all familiar with horror stories along this line perpetrated at the State and local levels.

When we look at Virginia's Exile Program we must not forget that they have a "shall issue" concealed carry permit system. They have for the most part a great appreciation of the Second Amendment and law-abiding citizens right to defend themselves with firearms if need be. They don't gleefully hound firearms owners and confiscate their firearms as happened here in Maryland.

Until the situation is better in Maryland in those areas, and crime rates substantially reduced compared to other states, we feel that HB 318 risks hurting the good guys out there in Maryland. And maybe some not-so-good-guys who have committed some law violations as young people, but who are on the straight and narrow now. Those in this latter category are not given much relief by HB 1367 and HB 1368.

Where states have enacted laws similar to HB 605 they have consistently had quick reductions in their crime rates. **This Legislature's failure to enact past such bills has directly led to the death of, and injury to, innocent Maryland citizens.** We've been telling you that for years, and for years most of you have failed to listen. Indeed, Maryland's worsening crime situation compared to other states - as shown on an Attachment to our HB 605 testimony is partly due to this Legislature's failure to try something proven to work elsewhere.

Maryland's comparative crime rates are prima facie evidence that all citizens are at such a high risk of violence, robbery, or murder that they should automatically be considered to have a "good and substantial" reason to carry a firearm for self defense. The Maryland State Police's routine denial of most all concealed carry permit applications for lack of a "good and substantial" reason is so ludicrous that it is obscene. If Maryland had an increased number of law-abiding citizens carrying concealed weapons then criminals would face uncertainty about their potential victims' ability to defend themselves. Most of Maryland's victims of violence and homicide are young Blacks in Baltimore City and Prince George's County. Many shot are involved in drug gang warfare, but some of the dead and wounded were innocent, law-abiding citizens. But drug gang warriors are already illegally armed and will remain so. The consequences of that fall heaviest upon Blacks who are now law-abiding citizens, even if they were not as youths. Blacks most need the protection of a concealed carry firearm. Many of all races therefore have decided to carry concealed weapons illegally. They are out there on the streets right now as we sit here, particularly in Baltimore City and PG County. After all, is it smarter to be risk being murdered or risk some jail time? Don't put citizens, Black or otherwise, into such a predicament. Pass HB 605, not HB 318. Don't let an out-of-control State or local Administration put folks away for a long time by some off-the-wall decision under HB 318 and other law when they just wanted to protect themselves and their families.

Sincerely,

Robert M. T. Wilson
For the Legislative Committee