December 05, 2022

***Subject: Charles County Commissioner’s Bill #2022-51***

President Collins and fellow Commissioners:

My name is Brian Rehm and I live in La Plata. I am here to speak in opposition to Commissioner’s Bill #2022-51.

I am a Sportsman and a firearm owner, as are others in attendance that are here to speak. I am also a MD State Certified Hunter Education Instructor for the past 25 years, serving as Chief Instructor for almost 15 of those years. We have taught classes at many venues in the area that would now be impossible to teach at if this bill becomes law.

While the stated or implied intention of the law may be more targeted toward the concealed carry of handguns, the law as written prohibits **ALL** firearms and not just handguns. By specifying that it would be illegal to possess a weapon or firearm within 100 yards of a Government building, it would be impossible for me to even drive past such a building if I am driving to an area to target shoot or hunt. I could not drive past the Court House, Government Building, Board of Elections, any school, or any Fire Station on the way to property that I have access to in order to enjoy those activities. I would be unable to continue holding Hunter Education classes at the La Plata Fire Department – something that has helped that department be called on less frequently to respond to hunting-related accidents.

Furthermore, by extending the prohibited zone to 100 yards, this would declare non-Government buildings which are within the 100 yard exclusion zone to be off-limits; building such as offices and perhaps even private residences. Oregon and New York State have attempted to do a similar thing, which is being challenged in court. You simply do not have the authority to impose restrictions like this on private property. This bill **WILL** subject this Board to a similar legal challenge – something that would be an irresponsible waste of County taxpayer funds.

You could say that what I am arguing against is not the intention of the law but if it were to be enforced, it would have to be enforced AS WRITTEN and not as you think or believe it should or would be applied. It applies to all “Weapons” and “Firearms” including those possessed for lawful and licensed purposes. It is an ill-conceived and unnecessary bill. In fact, this bill is redundant with Maryland Criminal Code 4-101 in that 4-101 defines “weapons” as “Nunchaku”, “Pepper Mace”, “Star Knife” and other types of knives that are already prohibited at any place at any time with very few exceptions that are listed in Maryland Criminal Code 4-101(b). Further, this bill actually invalidates one of those exceptions in its entirety - specifically Maryland Criminal Code 4-101(b)(3) which states an exemption is allowed for “a holder of a permit to carry a handgun issued under Title 5, Subtitle 3 of the Public Safety Article” and does not specify any location restrictions identified in 2022-051 – certainly not a 100 yard radius around a Government building. **YOU ARE EXCEEDING YOUR AUTHORITY BY SUPERSEDING STATE LAW ESPECIALLY WITH THIS 100 YARD “ZONE OF EXCLUSION”!**  If you really mean to restrict possession within the building itself, State law already allows you to post a sign at the entrances to accomplish this.

In summary, however well-intentioned you think this law is, it is simply “Feel Good” legislation that will have absolutely no impact on deterring crime and only creates impossible obstacles for responsible firearm-owning citizens to navigate. You will open yourself to litigation **WHEN (not IF)** enforcement is levied on someone who may drive through the “100 yard exclusion zone” on their way to an otherwise legal firearm-related activity. It’s poor construction creates more obstacles to responsible, legal ownership, transport and use of firearms than it does for solving any problems and should be immediately withdrawn. Don’t pass it with a promise to fix it later because there is no believable motivation to do so.

If you want to actually make a difference, then work with the court system to stop the revolving door for the criminals. How many cases have we seen where someone is stopped for a vehicle equipment violation and during that interaction, drugs or illegal firearms are discovered? Now with the legalization of recreational marijuana, it may be more difficult to execute a probable cause search of a vehicle resulting in the discovery and seizure of these illegal firearms. Stop the release of these offenders on personal recognizance after their arrest for these crimes and keep them in jail where they belong. Figure out how to fix that! Increase the number of school resource officers in the schools to try to prevent youth from going astray in the first place. Hold the parents accountable for their children’s actions. Don’t burden the public with useless, do-nothing feel-good legislation that is impossible to comply with.