

Maryland Shall Issue®
The Citizens Defense League of Maryland

Maryland Shall Issue® Position Statement

HB618 - Task Force to Study Access of Individuals with Mental Illness to Regulated Firearms – OPPOSE

Hearing Date, February 21, 1:00pm

Establishing a Task Force to Study Access of Individuals with Mental Illness to Regulated Firearms; providing for the membership, staffing, and duties of the Task Force; requiring the Task Force to report to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 31, 2012, on legislative options for limiting the access to regulated firearms of individuals with a history of mental illness; and expanding the access of law enforcement officers to specified mental health records.

This bill is the return of HB730 from last year, where it was given an unfavorable report in the House Judiciary Committee.

If you recall, HB730 was originally written to specify that a person diagnosed with any mental health condition would be disqualified from firearms ownership. The bill was subsequently altered to propose establishment of a task force to “study” the issue.

This bill is born out of the Giffords shooting in Arizona and the Virginia Tech shooting.

It is clear that there are members of the General Assembly that are so intent on further restricting your right to own a firearm that, realizing that they can't do it with a frontal assault, are resorting to flanking maneuvers like this.

No one wants people with serious mental disorders that may be a danger to themselves or others to have access to firearms.

However, that's not what this bill is about. It's about attacking your right to own a firearm by putting together yet another “reasonable” proposal. They want to get everyone to agree that “crazy people” shouldn't have guns and then they'll simply redefine what “crazy” is. Let's not forget that the original version of this bill specified that anyone with a condition from the DSM-IV (psychiatric diagnostic manual) would become a prohibited person. Let's also not forget that according to the DSM-IV that anxiety and sexual dysfunction are mental disorders.

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We can see that they are stacking the deck against us just by looking at the proposed membership of this task force:

- (1) the Secretary of State Police, or the Secretary's designee;
- (2) the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene, or the Secretary's designee;
- (3) the Attorney General, or the Attorney General's designee;
- (4) the Chief Administrative Law Judge of the Office of Administrative Hearings, or the Judge's designee;
- (5) the Public Defender of Maryland, or the Public Defender's designee;
- (6) the Director of the Office of Forensic Services in the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, or the Director's designee; and
- (7) the following individuals, appointed by the Governor:
 - (i) one representative of the Maryland Fraternal Order of Police;
 - (ii) one representative of the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research;
 - (iii) **one representative of the National Rifle Association;**
 - (iv) one representative of the Mental Health Association of Maryland;
 - (v) one representative of the Maryland Disability Law Center;
 - (vi) one representative of the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Maryland.

With a dozen members, this task force proposes only one representative from the firearms community who would in all likelihood not even be a Maryland resident.

This bill was defeated by only one vote last year and we must once again stop it dead in its tracks. If this task force is formed and their proposals accepted into law, there will be virtually no limit as to how wide a net they could cast in order to bring you into conflict with this legislation.

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What we need you to do:

1. Contact the members of the House Judiciary Committee below and ask them for an unfavorable report on HB618.
 - Prohibiting people from owning firearms based on a health condition actually creates problems because it will discourage people from seeking professional help.
 - Maryland already has a mental health release form as part of the purchase process for a regulated firearm.
 - An individual is already disqualified if they have been diagnosed with “a mental illness that so substantially impairs the mental or emotional functioning of an individual as to make care or treatment necessary or advisable for the welfare of the individual or for the safety of the person or property of another.”
 - Remind the members of the committee that they gave this bill an unfavorable report last year.

House Judiciary Committee Contact Information
Continues on Next Page

Dial 1-800-492-7122 + Ext. number

The Honorable "name"
“room number & building”
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

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