

Executive Summary

The Secure All Firearms Effectively (SAFE) Act will require firearm retail establishments in Baltimore County to install appropriate security measures to protect their firearms inventory from burglary. During 2018 and 2019, seven different Baltimore County firearm retail establishments were attacked by burglars ten times. In four of those incidents, burglars got inside and removed guns. Fifty-one guns were stolen in just one of those burglaries.

In June 2019, burglars attacked firearm retail establishments in Howard County and Montgomery County on successive nights, ramming each one with a car and stealing a total of 45 firearms. One of Baltimore County's attempted firearm retail establishment burglaries during 2019 appears to involve a suspect who was charged in those cases.

These stolen guns are sold and traded to criminals, and used to commit more crimes. The Baltimore County Police Department has been unable to persuade all operators of firearm retail establishments located in the County to improve their security measures to an adequate level.

Maryland law specifically authorizes local jurisdictions to regulate the purchase, sale, transfer, ownership, possession, and transportation of (1) a handgun, rifle, or shotgun; and (2) ammunition for and components of a handgun, rifle, or shotgun, within 100 yards of or in a park, church, school, public building, and other place of public assembly. Criminal Law Section 4-209, Md. Ann. Code. Eighteen of Baltimore County's 19 firearm retail establishments are located within this designation, and can be regulated by the County.

This bill creates a new County license that will be required prior to storing firearms inventory in a firearm retail establishment, if the store is located in the designated areas where the County is authorized to regulate. Police Department approval of a security plan is required to obtain a license. A gun show located in the designated areas will be required to have a security plan approved by the Police Department. Specific physical security measures, video surveillance, and a monitored alarm system are required for a qualifying firearm retail establishment or gun show security plan. As an alternative to the specific physical security measures listed in the bill for firearm retail establishments, the Chief of Police will be authorized to approve a combination of other physical security elements that provide adequate security.

This bill also requires County-licensed dealers transporting firearms for sale, within the County, to have in their possession an inventory list with the make and serial number for each firearm; dealers must also have a copy of the list available at their business premises; and the list must be provided to law enforcement on request.

The bill provides for a correction notice to be issued, with time specified for correction of a violation, prior to issuing a citation. The bill gives the Chief of Police authority to enforce the license requirement, including authorization to post one or more officers or security guards at the expense of the owner of the premises if a violation has occurred that brings the security of firearms into question.

The bill provides for a six-month grace period after enactment, for existing firearms dealers to come into compliance with the new license requirements.