

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY

2644 Riva Road • Annapolis • Maryland • 21401

BILL: HB760 HANDGUNS - SCHOOL EMPLOYEES - HANDGUN PERMITS AND CARRYING WEAPONS ON SCHOOL PROPERTY

HEARING DATE: MARCH 6, 2018

COMMITTEE: JUDICIARY

POSITION: OPPOSE

CONTACT PERSON: Jeanette Ortiz, Esq., *Legislative & Policy Counsel* (410.703.5352)

The Board of Education of Anne Arundel County firmly opposes **HB760 Handguns - School Employees - Handgun Permits and Carrying Weapons on School Property**. This bill would authorize a county board of education to authorize school employees in the local school system to carry a handgun on school property. The bill would create an exception to the prohibition against carrying a deadly weapon on public school property for a person who has been authorized to carry a handgun by a county board and who has been issued a handgun permit by the Department of State Police (DSP) if the weapon is secured on the person's body. In addition, HB760 would not require this individual to provide a good and substantial reason to wear, carry, or transport a handgun.

Safety in public schools remains increasingly important to local boards of education, as school-related security incidents and threats throughout Maryland and the nation have, unfortunately, increased. As such, it is imperative that educational leaders are included in the continuing development of security plans.

The State of Maryland and the local boards of education have taken many steps over the years to ensure student safety in schools. In response to the tragic events of September 11, 2001, federal, State and local education officials joined with public safety and emergency management officials to review existing school safety policies and improve coordination through comprehensive emergency plans. Following the tragic school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut in 2012, the legislature called for a review of all emergency plans and the State Board adopted new regulations to specify the types of emergency drills that all schools must conduct each year. In 2013, the State budget included \$25 million to support projects to help increase school safety. In 2015, legislation passed to require that local school systems require contractors and subcontractors to conduct background checks to ensure that no employee is assigned to work on school premises with direct, unsupervised, and uncontrolled access to children if the employee has been convicted of specified crimes. Also in 2015, the General Assembly passed legislation to exempt qualified retired law enforcement officers from the prohibition against carrying or possessing a deadly weapon on public school property.

Many steps have been taken over the years to improve school safety and security. The Anne Arundel County Board of Education supports legislation and program initiatives that contribute to the safety and well-being of students in school and in the community. However, the Board opposes legislation proposed as "quick fixes" or "Band Aid" solutions such as HB760, which would authorize school personnel to carry handguns on school property. The Board has several

concerns with this bill, including the fact that a school employee would not be required to provide a good and substantial reason to wear, carry, or transport a handgun on school property.

It is important to note that the U.S. Department of Education, in its *Guide for Developing High Quality School Emergency Operations Plans*, advises “the possibility of an active shooter situation is not justification for the presence of firearms on campus in the hands of any personnel other than law enforcement officers.”

Accordingly, the Anne Arundel County Board of Education respectfully requests an UNFAVORABLE committee report on **HB760**.