



## Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

### Testimony in Support of SB 486 - Public Safety - Regulated Firearms - Transfer

TO: Chairman Zirkin and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Stephen C. Buckingham, Chair, Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland.

DATE: February 21, 2019

I am here today because gun violence is a moral issue and a religious problem. It is a moral issue because the suffering of innocents at the hands of other human beings is defined as an evil, and people of faith are required to confront evil. It is a religious problem because faith groups and their clergy are repeatedly called upon to respond to and alleviate the suffering of the innocent. We always hear that suffering victims and their families deserve our “thoughts and prayers.”

In ancient times, evil was thought of as something with cosmic causes; floods, earthquakes, and fires were called Acts of God or sent by evil forces. But nowadays, we increasingly define "evil" as something caused by human agency: crime, oppression, sexual abuse, mass murder. The difference is that human-created evil can, and should, be prevented whenever possible. Our scriptures may not speak with one voice about why suffering happens, but they are unanimous in commanding people of faith to actively respond to that human suffering.

As the natural consequence of our compassionate response to human suffering, we are called to seek ways to reduce this suffering by supporting preventive measures, laws to keep guns out of the hands of people who can misuse them, including people convicted of violent assaults, those suffering from mental illness capable of harming themselves or others, domestic abusers, and children.

For this reason, we support SB 346 which closes a loophole in the law that requires people who are not licensed dealers to follow reasonable requirements, including a firearm application, before transferring handguns to others. Under current caselaw, a person may avoid the legal requirements by claiming that he/she only “loaned” the gun to the other person. This situation is rife for exploitation by unscrupulous individuals, and it promotes the spread of firearms without the normal oversight of transfers that keep guns out of the hands of people who should not have them.

The measure before you today is another tool for law enforcement to protect the people from gun violence. We urge a favorable report.

*Stephen C. Buckingham*

Lay Community Minister and Chair

Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

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