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MEDCHI, THE MARYLAND STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY, FILES AMICUS BRIEF TO UPHOLD ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY GUN LAW

BALTIMORE, September 5, 2023 – MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, has filed an amicus brief to urge the federal appeals court to uphold an Anne Arundel County gun law. The law in question, [ruled this past March](#), requires gun dealers to distribute mental health information and safety pamphlets with the sale of firearms. A judge sided with the county this past spring saying that the law is legal; but gun groups are appealing the decision, saying the law violates their free speech rights.

The law requires firearms retailers to display and distribute materials relating to gun safety, gun training, suicide prevention, mental health, and conflict resolution. The purpose of the law is to reduce the risk of suicide as well as harm to others.

Anne Arundel County passed the law requiring the pamphlets in March 2022, nearly four years after five journalists were killed in a shooting at the *Capital Gazette* in Annapolis. Following this deadly mass shooting, Anne Arundel County Executive Stuart Pittman created the Gun Violence Prevention Task Force to study gun violence and recommend actions to help reduce gun violence in the county. The Task Force recommended that the County establish a partnership with gun sellers, gun safety advocacy organizations, and agencies working to prevent domestic violence and suicide. In 2022, Anne Arundel County Council passed Bill 108-21 which directs the County’s Health Department to distribute literature about “gun safety, gun training, suicide prevention, mental health, and conflict resolution” to stores that sell firearms and ammunition and requires gun stores to display this literature and to distribute it along with the purchase of firearms and ammunition. The literature consists of a pamphlet (jointly authored by the National Shooting Sports Foundation and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention) concerning firearms and suicide prevention, as well as a one-page insert which provides local resources for suicide conflict and prevention.

The law was then challenged by *Maryland Shall Issue*, a gun rights group, who is representing four shop owners in the county. The group claims that the law violates their free speech rights as it forces firearm sellers to submit to *compelled* speech. U.S. District Court Judge Stephanie A. Gallagher ruled that the law, known as Bill 108-21, is constitutional after four gun dealers sued the county in April 2022. After losing the

initial case, the gun dealers filed their appeal days later. The case is now working its way through the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. Titled *Maryland Shall Issue, Inc., et al. v. Anne Arundel County*, the case awaits a final decision by the U.S. Court which will likely set a precedent over how far warning labels can go and what communities can do to increase public gun safety.

The *amicus curiae* brief, filed jointly by MedChi, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the AMA, and other special interest groups, claims that “*amici* share the strong conviction . . . that the County and other state and local governments must be able to respond to the untenable levels of firearm violence, including suicide and violence against others, by requiring the distribution to firearm purchasers of potentially life-saving information concerning suicide prevention, conflict resolution, and secure firearm storage. *Amici* have an enormous interest in this case because a negative outcome would detrimentally impact the health of Maryland’s most vulnerable citizens”.

“MedChi’s decision to file an amicus brief defending our county’s gun violence prevention work has relevance beyond this court case” said Anne Arundel County Executive Steuart Pittman. “It demonstrates that doctors are willing to join forces with local government to address the gun violence epidemic that threatens our communities, even when that work is under attack by political organizations that seek to proliferate firearms.”

MedChi CEO Gene Ransom echoed this sentiment. “Gun violence continues to plague our country and our communities. While the political debate in Washington continues, Anne Arundel County, the AMA, and MedChi will continue to fight for common-sense solutions that prevent gun violence and save lives”.

About MedChi

MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society is a non-profit membership association of Maryland physicians. It is the largest physician organization in Maryland. The mission of MedChi is to serve as Maryland's foremost advocate and resource for physicians, their patients and the public health of Maryland. For more information, please visit www.medchi.org.