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April 3, 2020

The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan Jr.
Governor of Maryland
State House
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor Hogan,

We write with great concern regarding a recent request by some of our Democratic colleagues to remove firearm stores from the list of essential businesses permitted to stay open during the COVID-19 public health crisis. We ask that you continue to comply with the federal guidance that allows these businesses to remain open.

As you are aware, the federal guidance issued on March 28, 2020 states "Functioning critical infrastructure is imperative during the response to the COVID-19 emergency for both public health and safety as well as community well-being." In the "Law Enforcement, Public Safety, and Other First Responders" section, the guidance lists "workers supporting the operation of firearm or ammunition product manufacturers, retailers, importers, distributors, and shooting ranges."

Our colleagues' letter makes it appear that the only reason someone would want to purchase a firearm is to do harm and it casts aspersions at legal businesses in compliance with a vast number of federal and state laws. There is nothing to indicate that these businesses are not complying with public health guidelines or that they are a hotspot for community transmission.

Without a doubt, Marylanders should be at home unless seeking or providing some essential service. Protecting oneself and family is not just an essential service, it is an essential human right. Our colleagues not only fail to acknowledge this, they also fail to acknowledge the fact that, in many communities, a firearm is necessary not simply to protect oneself, but also to provide food for families.

We understand that certain businesses may not seem essential if you do not use them yourself. We also recognize the temptation to use a public health crisis as a backdrop for political virtue signaling. Some members of the General Assembly have built their careers on trying to put gun stores out of business, well before any pandemic. However, politics should not play a part in our state's response to the COVID-19 crisis and we believe this to be a well-meaning albeit misguided attempt by our colleagues to do what they believe will protect our citizens.

However well-meaning, we strongly disagree with our colleagues in this matter and ask that you continue to follow the federal guidance and allow gun stores to remain open.

Sincerely,

Nic Kipke
Minority Leader

Kathy Szeliga
Minority Whip