



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF DELAWARE  
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**Permit to Purchase Handguns**  
**Statement Before the Office of Management and Budget**  
**in the hearing on the FY 2025 Budget Request**  
**of the Department of Safety and Homeland Security**  
**November 14, 2023**

The League of Women Voters calls upon the Governor to include funding and authorization in the Recommended FY 2025 State Budget for a permit-to-purchase-handguns program (a proposal introduced in the 152<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly in SS 1 for SB 2).

The CDC reports that in 2022, there were more than 48,000 firearm-related deaths in the United States, with an average of 132 people dying each day.<sup>1</sup> Firearms are now the leading cause of death among children and teens ages 1-19 years.<sup>2</sup> Gun violence has become a public health crisis.

Here in Delaware, an average of 123 people die by guns each year, and 50 percent of gun deaths are homicides. Gun violence costs Delaware \$1.4 billion each year, of which \$44.4 million is paid by taxpayers.<sup>3</sup>

While much attention is paid to mass shootings with assault-style firearms, the vast majority of firearm homicides and suicides are committed with handguns.<sup>4,5</sup> SB 2 would require anyone seeking to purchase a handgun to first obtain a permit that requires them to be fingerprinted and to attend live firearm and safety training. These requirements, along with a built-in waiting period, play a critical role in preventing people with a history of violence or at risk for suicide, as well as gun traffickers, from obtaining firearms.<sup>6</sup> SB2 would also prohibit a licensed importer, manufacturer, or dealer, as well as unlicensed persons, from selling or transferring a handgun to an individual unless the individual has a handgun-qualified purchaser permit.

Since taking its position on gun policy in 1990, the League of Women Voters has engaged in robust lobbying at the state and federal levels and has worked with a coalition of organizations to motivate and educate citizens about gun safety. We strongly support a *permit-to purchase-handguns program*, as envisioned in SS 1 for SB2, and believe that the fees charged to obtain a handgun in such a manner would actually be high enough to cover most, if not all, of the cost to implement and sustain this life-saving program.

In determining the cost of such a program, we must also take into account the potential for immense savings from: the reduction in lives lost or forever shattered; the reduction in emergency room visits and trauma care; the reduction in costs associated with law enforcement, legal proceedings, and incarceration; and the reduction in chronic fear and trauma experienced by communities besieged by gun violence.

Thank you in advance for considering these points and including the needed funding in the FY 2025 Recommended Budget.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/firearms/fastfact.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://nihcm.org/newsletter/gun-violence-is-a-public-health-problem>

<sup>3</sup> <https://everystat.org/#Delaware>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/04/26/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-u-s/#:~:text=In%202020%2C%20the%20most%20recent,in%203%25%20of%20firearm%20murders.>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.rutgers.edu/news/unsecured-handguns-account-majority-firearm-suicide-deaths-united-states>

<sup>6</sup> <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/departments/health-policy-and-management/research-and-practice/center-for-gun-violence-solutions/solutions/permit-to-purchase-laws>