

To the Honorable Members of the County Council of Montgomery County, MD,

I urge you to vote against Expedited Bill 21-22, Weapons – Firearms in or Near Places of Public Assembly. I know you want to make me safer, but this bill does the exact opposite.

Antisemitic incidents are on the rise in the county, particularly by white supremacistsⁱ. White supremacists are the most likely of all extremists to use violenceⁱⁱ. They target synagogues because these facilities serve the Jewish community and assure the presence of a significant number of Montgomery County citizens at certain times of the week. Furthermore, In the orthodox community, Sabbath synagogue attendees do not carry their phones, so there would be a delay in alerting police to an active threat.

An additional factor impacting incident response is that Montgomery County police are understaffed and recruitment is down. Our sworn officers per capita is only half the national averageⁱⁱⁱ. It is unrealistic to expect police to be able to engage with an active threat fast enough to prevent mass casualties.

Furthermore, turning places of worship (and essentially the entirety of the county) into gun free zones would do the precise opposite of its intent. It would serve as a welcome sign for potential mass murderers as to which locations they can “safely” unleash their mayhem^{iv} — and there’ll be nobody there (with a gun) to stop them! This is because the only people who will comply are law-abiding, licensed gun owners. Do you really think someone intent on mass murder will leave their gun at home because of this law?

Lastly, the expedited basis of this bill is unjustified. The CCW permit application process takes 90 days from submission to approval^v plus a few days to mail the permit to the applicant. This provides the MDSP sufficient time to perform a background investigation and interview up to three character witnesses. Before you can do that, you have to schedule and attend a 16-hour training class. You also need to take a live fire test with your instructor at a range to prove your proficiency firing a handgun. You also need to schedule and have your fingerprints taken to submit along with your application and fee. Then your CCW permitted citizen would have to select and purchase an appropriate concealed carry weapon, which in Maryland involves a minimum 7 day waiting period. Therefore, you have 90 to 120 days before the impact of additional CCW permit holders will be seen in the county.

CCW permit holders should be allowed to carry their concealed weapon to their place of worship specifically because of the heightened threat against places of worship. This bill will make it illegal for them to protect themselves specifically at the place they need it most. Therefore, I strongly urge you to vote against Expedited Bill 21-22.

Larry Jaffe
Silver Spring, MD

ⁱ “Sharp rise in anti-Semitism in Maryland, Virginia and D.C., ADL reports” <https://www.washingtonjewishweek.com/sharp-rise-in-anti-semitism-in-maryland-virginia-and-d-c-adl-reports/> and “ADL H.E.A.T. Map™ (Hate, Extremism, Antisemitism, Terrorism)” <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-to-track-hate/heat-map>

ii “Domestic Extremism in America: Examining White Supremacist Violence in the Wake of Recent Attacks”
<https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/resource/domestic-extremism-america-examining-white-supremacist-violence-wake-recent-attacks> Relevant excerpt below:

In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the killer who attacked worshippers in a synagogue wrote that he believed Western Civilization was facing “extinction” and that refugees were “invaders”:[5]

The Christchurch, New Zealand killer titled his writings “The Great Replacement” and targeted Muslims in a country he was initially only visiting:[6]

The shooter in El Paso, Texas targeted Latinx people in the United States but wrote that he “supported” the racist screed from Christchurch:[7]

In Poway, California, the shooter first targeted a mosque and then a month later opened fire in a synagogue, claiming that Jews were orchestrating a “planned genocide of the European race”:[8]

And most recently, the killer in Buffalo, New York, spent weeks identifying a locale in which to murder Black Americans. His own screed was largely a plagiarism of the Christchurch shooter’s “Great Replacement” text, but was so sloppy that at times he merely swapped out terms for one victimized community for another.[9]

This heartbreaking trail of violence illustrates how fluidly the Great Replacement conspiracy theory travels across borders and populations.

Unfortunately, these mass casualty attacks are only one element in the larger phenomenon of violent white supremacy and domestic extremism.

Over the last decade in available data, white supremacist terrorism in the United States has increased many times over. Of the 100 white supremacist attacks between 2000 and 2019, 80 of them occurred after 2009, according to the Global Terrorism Database (GTD).[10] And while these terrorist attacks have increased, they have also become more lethal. Mass casualty attacks perpetrated by white supremacist terrorists like the horrific attack in Buffalo, used to be a rare occurrence. Now, they are frequent tragedies.

iii “[Departures, sagging recruitment plague Montgomery County police \(bethesdamagazine.com\)](https://bethesdamagazine.com/bethesda-beat/police-fire/departures-sagging-recruitment-plague-montgomery-county-police-even-as-crime-soars/)”

<https://bethesdamagazine.com/bethesda-beat/police-fire/departures-sagging-recruitment-plague-montgomery-county-police-even-as-crime-soars/>

iv “Mass Public Shootings keep occurring in Gun-Free Zones: 94% of attacks since 1950”

<https://crimeresearch.org/2018/06/more-misleading-information-from-bloombergs-everytown-for-gun-safety-on-guns-analysis-of-recent-mass-shootings/>

v “[Wear and Carry Permit \(maryland.gov\)](https://mdsp.maryland.gov/Organization/Pages/CriminalInvestigationBureau/LicensingDivision/Firearms/WearandCarryPermit.aspx)”

<https://mdsp.maryland.gov/Organization/Pages/CriminalInvestigationBureau/LicensingDivision/Firearms/WearandCarryPermit.aspx>