



# MICHIGAN UNITED *Since 1937* CONSERVATION CLUBS

Uniting Citizens to Conserve, Protect and Enhance Michigan's Natural Resources and Outdoor Heritage  
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Good afternoon Madam chair and members of the committee. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. My name is Amy Trotter. I am the Executive Director of Michigan United Conservation Clubs, the largest statewide conservation organization in the country.

I am here representing my 40,000 members and 200 member clubs opposing much of the proposed gun control bills in this package. Our membership consists of thousands of hunters, anglers, trappers, and shooters, and many of our affiliate clubs and members are active in recreational shooting sports where many of our clubs operate firearm ranges.

MUCC has a truly grassroots policy system, our members determine the policy of the organization, not our staff. MUCC's policy positions are drafted, debated, and voted on by members.

Since MUCC's inception in 1937, our membership has spoken time and time again with broad support for an individual's firearms rights, opposing any attempt to infringe on the rights of lawful firearm owners. *Michigan United Conservation Clubs grassroots, member-driven policy supports enforcing existing firearm laws and opposes new regulations on our members who are responsible, legal gun owners.*

As such, after reviewing the proposed legislation, MUCC opposes HB 4138-39 and HB 4142-50, as infringements on the rights of lawful firearm owners within our membership.

MUCC does however support, as introduced, HB 4140-4141 as standalone sales and use tax exemptions on gun safety devices, as promoting and educating on safe and lawful firearm use falls within the scope of our organization's mission.

This package of legislation has too many ambiguities, lacks sufficient exemptions for lawful hunting and recreational shooting purposes, and creates unnecessary burdens on those individuals and law enforcement agencies in trying to comply with and enforce the laws.

If this package of legislation was to become law in its current form, my membership would turn to MUCC for information and guidance on how to comply. At this time, I do not have an answer

for what would happen to the millions of firearms already owned in Michigan or what firearm owners' next step should be. For example, under HB 4138:

- Our hunter safety program would be inhibited from training new hunters and high school trap and skeet teams may be prohibited from continuing because this proposal would require the owner of the firearms to be physically present, even in supervised practice, training or competitions. If the minor is at a range engaged in target practice or for hunter safety education, it is more typically under the supervision of a coach, range supervisor or other designated adult—not the parent or guardian, who may be the owner of the firearm they are using.
- Our hunter recruitment, retention and reactivation efforts will be stymied because Michigan hunters could not hand a shotgun or deer rifle to even their adult family members or lifelong friends to try something new. In a similar, very common scenario, a youth hunter may be mentored by an individual who is not their parent or guardian. While you have exempted the youth hunting under this proposal from needing to have a firearm license, if the youth requires assistance the mentor would be violating the law by simply holding the firearm (if they do not own it) while the youth navigates a difficult trail, climbs into the deer blind or hands it off safely to tie their boot.
- In the big picture, simply mandating a license for all firearm possession leads to a significant question: does the requirement to “obtain a license” suggest an owner of a firearm (long gun) is now required to keep on their person the “license” to own/possess said firearm? The legislation is not clear, but if the answer is ‘yes’ it leads to a further question and possibly a concern about enforcement. What about the firearms in their current possession that did not require any form of purchase license or background check? And, if found to be hunting with a hunting license but without a “possession license” is it considered to be poaching, which has other legal implications?

Under 4144, I do not know why a locked glove box was suggested as suitable safe storage, but a locked vehicle or trunk was not—shotguns do not fit in glove boxes. I do not know why gun ranges and hunt clubs wouldn't be exempt from these safe storage requirements, as their entire purpose is to utilize firearms for lawful purposes and to provide training.

Under the proposal for a new red flag law within HB 4145, it would seem that this is duplicating efforts when Michigan already has existing laws prohibiting firearm ownership and possession based on mental health, personal protection orders and criminal charges. But that is only if prosecutors will enforce the existing 151 laws already referencing firearms in Michigan's Compiled Laws.

Creating a gun-free zone under HB 4149-4150 in all state-owned or leased buildings poses some serious issues for hunters, recreational shooters, and youth education. This ban in its plain language would include buildings at Department of Natural Resources-owned and leased shooting ranges, potentially the parking lots at state game areas and state parks where hunting is legal, or even the Cedar Lake Outdoor Center, the youth camp facility that MUCC leases from the DNR in the Waterloo Recreation Area where every summer we instruct dozens of youth in

hunter safety and have a range for target shooting. This simply doesn't make any common sense.

Very practically, while we will not be supportive of this legislation because of our member-passed policies, if you also cannot answer any of these questions on how this will be implemented and applied in real-life situations, I urge you to slow down this process and to listen to the thousands of your constituents who also have concerns.

In closing, firearms and conservation are two sides of the same coin. Federal excise taxes on firearms and ammunition fuel wildlife conservation in Michigan and across the country. As a leader in Michigan's conservation circles, we certainly encourage, educate and promote firearm safety in all that we do in the outdoors and beyond. MUCC supports enforcing existing gun laws and the brave men and women in law enforcement who enforce them.

While we agree with the other individuals testifying against this legislation today on constitutional grounds, we did not want to just reiterate what you have and will continue to hear. MUCC believes in the second amendment, and it is written into our articles of incorporation. Instead today we chose to focus on the impact this legislation will have on law-abiding hunters, recreational shooters, and youth learning to hunt and handle firearms legally and safely. These impacts defy common sense.

Our membership has voted time and time again to oppose the further infringement of the rights of lawful firearm owners, choosing instead to support enforcing, and enhancing penalties, on existing gun laws.

