

Thank you, Chairman and Members of the Committee. My name is Destini Philpot. I'm a 19-year-old non-binary person from Baltimore City, I'm a leader with Students Demand Action Baltimore and a survivor of gun violence. To elaborate, I myself became a victim of gun violence when I was 7 years old. It was around the age of 3 that I first remember tracing a healed bullet wound on my father's stomach, not knowing what it was. At the age of eight, shots rang out from a park that I had been at with my siblings, all too familiar sounds. I was lifted off my feet by my sister and remember seeing a trail of blood flowing into the storm drain. I have lost 12 close friends to gun violence in the past two years and far more than that in my lifetime.

In Baltimore and across the country, we not only have a gun violence crisis, we have a crisis of unsolved shootings. Right now, the odds that police will solve a shooting are way too low. People who shoot someone are about half as likely to be arrested as people who kill or assault someone with other weapons. As with gun violence, the burden of unsolved shootings disproportionately impacts black and brown communities. When someone is fatally shot, white victims can expect an arrest 53% of the time, but if the victim is black or Latinx, the arrest rate is only 35%.

When police find a gun at a crime scene, they can use the serial number to do a trace to learn where it came from. With ghost guns, they can't, which means more unsolved murders. The systemic failure to solve gun crimes fuels more violence. Shooters walk free, people lose more faith in the police, and some decide to try to find justice on their own. There are already too many unsolved murders in our city and the proliferation of ghost guns would make investigations even more difficult. Gun violence does not affect "numbers and statistics." It affects real people. Real lives, families and communities are destroyed when we do not take the necessary steps to prevent the use and distribution of ghost guns.

Ghost guns may not seem to be a big part of the crisis now, but it's going to make the crisis worse if we don't do something about it. Thank you for your time.