

Written Testimony of Bridget McCullough **SUPPORT HB 910**

TO: Chair Luke Clippinger, Vice-Chair Vanessa Atterbeary, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Bridget McCullough, Mt. Airy, MD (District 4)

DATE: February 26, 2020

One month ago, over 400 volunteers and supporters with Maryland Moms Demand Action from nearly every legislative district across the state gathered in Annapolis and met with legislators demanding that our elected representatives do more to prevent gun violence in our communities. Since then, we have returned dozens of times to advocate for common sense changes to our gun laws. We represent thousands more mothers and others who can't take time away from work or family to demand that more be done to address the epidemic of gun violence in our country and our state.

Like another bill we're supporting, HB4, which would close the background check loophole by requiring a criminal background check on gun transfers by unlicensed, private sellers, HB910 would ensure that deadly weapons don't fall into the hands of people prohibited from possessing a firearm who are seeking to circumvent our state law. Right now, illegal gun traffickers, along with convicted felons, domestic abusers and others who couldn't pass a background check, can purchase unfinished receivers and other parts and kits which can easily be turned into guns with no background check and no questions asked. This bill makes sure that our laws are keeping up with rapid changes in technology by putting in place reasonable regulations prohibiting the purchase, possession, sale and manufacture of undetectable, disguised, untraceable, and unserialized firearms, also known as ghost guns.

Five states have already passed ghost gun laws to regulate 3D printed or DIY firearms, including undetectable weapons that can be carried through metal detectors or disassembled to evade detection by x-ray machines, disguised guns, such as those built to look like pens, keychains or cell phones, so they can be more easily concealed, and unserialized firearms sold without a background check and which cannot be traced by law enforcement. Maryland should be next to join New Jersey, Connecticut, California, New York, and Washington state.

Without this law, anyone with the right tools can easily access everything they need to assemble a ghost gun. Easy unfettered access to unfinished frames and receivers and the kits, tools, YouTube instructional videos, and rapidly advancing 3D printing technology are an appealing option for criminals and other prohibited purchasers, who couldn't pass a background check. These DIY kits are carefully designed by unscrupulous sellers to come as close to providing the end user with a firearm as possible without falling under the legal definition of a "firearm" under federal law. This dangerous loophole allows these people to end-run state and federal laws and access weapons that are ideally suited to criminal use, because they cannot be traced by law enforcement.

In the few short years that we have been pushing for this legislation in Maryland, ghost guns have gone from a seemingly minor threat to an exponentially more dangerous problem. Ghost guns have been used in mass shootings, in attacks on law enforcement, and have been seized with increasing regularity in criminal investigations.

To provide a few examples of what the ghost gun problem looks like:

- 1) In June 2013, a CA man killed five people in Santa Monica with homemade AR-15 assault-style rifles.¹
- 2) In July 2016, a gunman in Baltimore used an AR-15 assault-style rifle that he'd assembled to shoot at four police officers who returned fire and killed him.²
- 3) In November 2017, a man with severe mental illness and a criminal history prohibiting him from purchasing firearms, got around CA's tough gun laws by ordering parts to assemble an AR-15, and shot and killed 5 people and injured 18, including 7 children, at Rancho Tehama Reserve.³
- 4) In January 2018, a New Jersey man was arrested for unlawfully manufacturing and selling ghost guns out of his home.⁴
- 5) Also in January 2018, the WSJ reported in an article titled, "The Rise of Untraceable 'Ghost Guns,'" about a man manufacturing untraceable firearms in the Los Angeles machine shop where he worked who had sold 5 weapons to a convicted felon turned gun trafficker and offered to deliver 100 more before he was caught.⁵
- 6) On February 15, 2018, one day after the Parkland, Florida, school massacre, a high school student at Clarksburg High School in Montgomery County, Maryland was arrested bringing in a handgun he built at home using tools from a home improvement store. An AR-15 assault-style rifle was also found to be in mid-assembly at his home.⁶
- 7) Law enforcement in DC has seen an exponential increase in the number of ghost guns recovered from crime scenes: 3 in 2017, 25 in 2018, and 115 in 2019.⁷
- 8) One year ago in February 2019, a Dallas man was sentenced to eight years in prison after he was arrested in 2017 with a partially 3D-printed AR-15 assault-style rifle and a hit list of lawmakers including their addresses.⁸
- 9) Also in February 2019, a US Coast Guard lieutenant had amassed an arsenal of firearms and gun components used to fabricate untraceable home-built weapons was arrested by federal authorities who said he was planning a domestic terrorist attack.⁹

¹ <https://www.latimes.com/local/la-xpm-2013-jun-12-la-me-santa-monica-gun-20130613-story.html>

² <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/california-mass-shooter-made-his-own-killing-machines-n821516>

³ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/california-mass-shooter-made-his-own-killing-machines-n821516>

⁴ https://www.nj.com/atlantic/2018/01/man_was_building_selling_dozens_of_ghost_guns_out.html

⁵ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-rise-of-untraceable-ghost-guns-1515061800>

⁶

<https://www.germantownpulse.net/single-post/2018/04/12/Germantown-Teen-Who-Brought-%E2%80%9CGhost-Gun%E2%80%9D-to-Clarksburg-High-School-to-Expected-to-Plead-Guilty>

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<https://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/news/city-desk/blog/21109272/dc-recovered-115-ghost-guns-in-2019-up-from-25-the-year-before>

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https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/14/us/dallas-man-3d-printed-gun-prison-sentence/index.html?fbclid=IwAR2fv9bxS6LXX9mH5HnIwfrKauoSEtrYwNNPvR_N_EYE0zK_qNZjuBYcxSE

⁹ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/coast-guard-officer-accused-of-planning-terror-attack-amassed-an-arsenal-11550789657>

- 10) In July 2019, a convicted felon prohibited from possessing a firearm killed his 84-year-old grandfather with a ghost gun.¹⁰
- 11) In August 2019, police said they found a loaded ghost gun with a high-capacity magazine attached, as well as cash and drugs, on an Edgewood man sleeping on a sidewalk in a Bel Air.¹¹
- 12) In November 2019, a ghost gun was used in the Santa Clarita school shooting, where the gunman shot 5 classmates, killing 2.¹²
- 13) In December 2019, a Montgomery County, Maryland, man who sold ghost guns to drug dealers, heroin users, robbers and gang members, was sentenced to 9 years after the State's Attorney and County police worked two years to take "this purveyor of ghost guns" off the streets, "our region has one less source for illegal guns."¹³
- 14) In 2020, on New Year's Day, a couple shot and killed a woman in Rhode Island with a ghost gun.¹⁴
- 15) In January of this year, the FBI arrested 3 white supremacists in Maryland ahead of the MLK Day gun rights rally in Richmond, who were in possession of a fully automatic homemade machine ghost gun.¹⁵

That's just a few news reports that were easy to find online, and not at all an exhaustive list.

We all know there is no one solution to the levels of gun violence we experience in the United States or in Maryland, but preventing access to unserialized, undetectable and disguised Ghost Guns is a critical step toward ensuring the safety of our communities.

Please support HB910. Thank you.

¹⁰

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/angry-over-being-kicked-out-he-shot-his-grandfather--then-tried-to-cut-off-the-84-year-olds-head/2019/02/08/756084fa-2b0d-11e9-b011-d8500644dc98_story.html?fbclid=IwAR1REc9y2b2h7dSifAYTKYNDaP_iFwL-4gK8TEsbkXMTpj72866qJHp9vM

¹¹

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/harford/aegis/cng-ag-belair-gun-arrest-0816-20190816-kqoovj7jhzgbxful3qriy wzrme-story.html>

¹²

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2019-11-21/santa-clarita-shooting-45-caliber-gun-saugus-high-attack-a-ghost-gun-sheriff-says> & <https://www.thetrace.org/2019/11/santa-clarita-school-shooting-ghost-gun>

¹³ <https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/man-gets-9-years-in-prison-in-ghost-guns-case/2182577/>

¹⁴

<https://www.thedailybeast.com/police-charge-jack-doherty-and-shaylyn-moran-with-murdering-woman-with-3d-printed-gun?ref=scroll>

¹⁵ <https://www.thetrace.org/2020/01/white-supremacists-the-base-fbi-virginia-diy-ghost-gun>