

Testimony of Mindy Landau, Brady United Against Gun Violence, Maryland State  
Executive Committee

Support for HB 0638

Before the Maryland Judiciary Committee

March 1, 2021

Chairman Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and other distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee – I thank you for your support of HB 0638. I am a proud member of the Maryland State Executive Committee for Brady United Against Gun Violence, one of the oldest gun violence prevention organizations in the country, and a co-founder of its Montgomery County Chapter. Before retiring recently, I was a federal employee for 40 years.

As you are no doubt painfully aware, gun violence affects all Americans and all Marylanders. In fact, on average, over 680 people die from firearm injuries in Maryland each year.

No community in our state is immune.

That's why we are so proud to support HB 0638 which regulates 'ghost guns' and 3-D printed firearms here in Maryland. This change to our laws will help keep our community and our families safe. These untraceable weapons are a real and growing threat to public safety and to law enforcement. They look, feel and function like a traditional gun – and are just as deadly and dangerous.

Ghost guns undermine all gun laws. They are untraceable and unserialized, and are available to purchase and construct by anyone with an internet connection, without any background check. These "kits" can be bought by prohibited purchasers like domestic abusers, minors, gun traffickers and those who want to intentionally harm others. In fact, ghost guns are intentionally marketed as unregulated and untraceable to appeal to people who want to avoid background checks. This means anyone who has been deemed unfit to possess a firearm could easily manufacture one on a 3-D printer. And since they are created out of polymer plastics and cannot be detected with metal detectors, they can literally be taken anywhere.

The statistics are grim. In 2019, a man living in Silver Spring pled guilty for selling ghost guns to prohibited purchasers. That same year, 117 ghost guns were recovered by Maryland police and in 2020, over 60 guns were recovered in just three months. Between 2016 and 2019, more than 12,000 ghost gun kits were shipped to Maryland, with sales increasing by almost a factor of four during these years.

Gun violence is clearly an epidemic in our country and in our state. Over 700 people die of firearm injuries in Maryland each year. The majority of these deaths are homicides, which kill about 450 Marylanders per year. In Baltimore alone, there were 350 homicides in 2019 and 335 in 2020. Firearms are the leading cause of death among both children and teens in the State of Maryland. These numbers will only increase with the proliferation of unserialized and homemade firearms.

Ghost guns are also a nationwide problem. Other states, such as New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, California, and Washington D.C. have all taken action to regulate or ban ghost guns, and several other states are considering similar legislation. And even though California's strong gun laws are similar to those in Maryland, ghost guns there have been especially problematic, as they have been used in three mass shootings in that state – in Saugus (2019), Tehama County (2017) and Santa Monica (2013).

This bill is an important step in keeping ghost guns away from public places and away from our citizens, including children. That is why this legislation is so vital and so welcome. It's an investment in our State's future and Brady Maryland is proud to support it.