



**Olivia Bartlett, DoTheMostGood Maryland Team**

**Committee:** Judiciary

**Testimony on:** HB0425 - Public Safety - Untraceable Firearms

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** February 9, 2022

**Bill Sponsor:** Speaker Adrienne Jones and Delegate Lesley Lopez

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with more than 3000 members who live in all districts in Montgomery County and in several neighboring jurisdictions. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep all residents of our communities healthy and safe in a clean environment. DTMG strongly supports HB0425 because it will ban the purchase and possession of the untraceable “ghost guns” which hurt our communities and make our streets unsafe.

Ghost guns -- guns made from parts available without a background check -- are the fastest growing gun safety problem facing our state and the country today. These firearms, which are assembled from parts and sold in kits on the Internet without background checks, are increasingly becoming the weapon of choice among gun traffickers. Any individual – including teenagers -- with a computer can download a DIY kit and, using only tools found around the house, can make their own pistol, Glock 19, or assault-style rifle, such as AR-15 or AK-47, in just hours. It’s easy and cheap. These guns contain no serial numbers, so they cannot be traced, thwarting the ability of law enforcement to close cases, arrest criminals, and bring justice to survivors of gun violence.

The dramatic increase in the number of ghost guns across Maryland in the last few years is frightening. Montgomery County has seen a five-fold increase in ghost guns in the past few years. Recent shootings at Whitman and Magruder high schools in Montgomery County were by ghost guns. Law enforcement in Prince George’s County seized 264 untraceable ghost guns in 2021, up from just 27 in 2019. Since 2019, investigators in PG County have linked at least 13 homicides, 10 robberies, and 20 aggravated assaults to ghost guns. Baltimore is on pace to seize 700 ghost guns this year, compared to 345 last year, and only 12 in 2018.

The need for clear, comprehensive, and effective regulation of ghost guns has never been greater and is long overdue. HB0425 is common-sense legislation that will help to shut down unregulated sellers who sell ghost gun building kits and traffickers who sell these guns. It will

assist law enforcement and protect all Maryland residents. HB0425 will not apply to antique firearms or guns manufactured before 1968, and a grandfather clause would allow someone with a ghost gun to either sell the firearm to a licensed dealer or have the weapon properly imprinted with a serial number by a federally licensed dealer.

Passage of HB0425 will allow Maryland to keep up with the technology advances that have allowed untraceable guns to proliferate in the state. According to the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, the District of Columbia and 10 states, including California, Virginia and New Jersey, have also enacted laws to at least partially address the problem of undetectable or untraceable guns.

HB0425 also has an important racial equity element. Communities of color are disproportionately affected by gun violence. The more we can do to keep untraceable guns off our streets, the safer all communities, particularly communities of color, will be.

DoTheMostGood therefore strongly supports passage of this important legislation that can help restore safety and peace of mind across the state of Maryland, and **we urge a favorable report on HB0425.**

Respectfully submitted,

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