

Laranjani English - Watkins Mill High School Students Demand Action Leader

SB334 Senate Hearing

2/5/26

Hello, my name is Laranjani English, but most people know me as AJ. I'm a sophomore at Watkins Mill in Montgomery County, and a Students Demand Action volunteer.

I'm only 14 years old. I should be worried about homework, sports, and what I want to be when I grow up, not about whether I'll make it home alive.

But this is the reality my generation is living in.

Machine guns are illegal in Maryland. They're supposed to be off our streets. And yet, they keep showing up because the gun industry found a loophole.

We call them DIY machine guns. They start as regular pistols, but their design allows them to be converted into fully automatic weapons with a tiny, Lego-sized device called a switch. With that one add-on, a normal handgun can fire up to 1,200 rounds per minute — 20 rounds every second. That terrifies me, and it shouldn't be possible. Ever.

The switches themselves are already illegal. But because they're small, cheap, and easy to make with 3D printers, they're flooding our communities. ATF data shows that recoveries of these devices increased by nearly 800% in just four years. Law enforcement is finding them all across Maryland.

Guns are the leading cause of death for children and teens in Maryland. Most young people who die by guns are killed by someone else. So while gun manufacturer profits continue to go up, we live in fear of our lives being cut short every day.

This bill doesn't take guns away from responsible owners, punish responsible dealers, or target law enforcement or the military. It does one simple, common-sense thing: it holds the gun industry accountable and stops the sale of handguns that can easily be turned into illegal machine guns. We're not alone in this fight, either. 84% of Maryland voters support requiring manufacturers to design pistols so they cannot be turned into a fully automatic machine gun.

We shouldn't have to wait for another tragedy to make this obvious. I am tired of looking at the news every other day and seeing my generation ripped apart. We deserve more than thoughts and prayers. We deserve prevention. We deserve accountability. And we deserve to feel safe in our schools and our neighborhoods.

I ask our legislators, please pass this bill, for students like me, and for the future we're trying to survive long enough to reach.