



Date: February 11, 2026

To: Judiciary Committee

Position: Favorable

Reference: HB 577-Criminal Law - Firearm Crimes - Machine Gun Convertible Pistols

Dear Chair Bartlett and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of HB 577. LifeBridge Health and the Center for Hope support HB 577 because firearm-related injury and death are major public health issues in Maryland and across the United States, and this legislation represents a meaningful step toward preventing needless harm.

Gun violence is a public health crisis, every day in America, hundreds of people are killed or wounded by firearms; nationally, gun violence remains the leading cause of death for children and adolescents and is a top cause of death and injury for all. Nearly 130 Americans are killed with guns each day and more than 200 are shot and wounded — devastation that permeates families and communities. Research shows that stronger gun safety policies are associated with fewer gun deaths overall.

We have seen historic drops in the number of homicides in Baltimore and the number of gunshot wound admissions at our own Sinai Hospital's Level II trauma center. Efforts including our own Safe Streets community violence intervention team and our Hospital Violence Responders have saved dozens of lives and prevented death and injury. Nevertheless, despite these decreases, we must continue to strive for zero deaths by firearm.

We must look to further reduce fatalities by preventing the ability of existing guns to become machine gun convertible that are capable discharging 50 rounds in four seconds with a single trigger pull (<https://www.atf.gov/news/press-releases/us-attorney-and-atf-release-new-public-service-announcement-warning-against-possession>). Aftermarket devices such as these reduce the ability of the shooter to aim and become indiscriminate weapons of mass death. They serve no purpose in Maryland other than to needlessly create more death.

HB 577 strengthens prevention by addressing weapon lethality and access with a focus on convertible guns — firearms that can be transformed from semiautomatic to fully automatic by the simple addition of a device — reflect an understanding that limiting the ease with which weapons can be made more lethal supports violence prevention. These highly modifiable firearms have been implicated in violent crime in Maryland, prompting lawsuits from state and local officials who argue that such conversions significantly exacerbate public safety risks.

Indeed, readily convertible guns, including devices like “Glock switches” or auto sears, can dramatically increase the rate of fire and lethality of a firearm. When such enhancements are inexpensive and untraceable, they especially endanger communities already grappling with high levels of violence by increasing the speed and volume of gunfire in criminal conflicts.



By reducing the circulation of weapons that can so easily be transformed into rapid-fire instruments of violence — while preserving lawful, regulated ownership — HB 577 helps diminish opportunities for mass casualties, drive down homicides, and remove vectors of harm from the street. This approach is consistent with evidence showing that common-sense firearm safety laws are associated with lower gun death rates. ([Everytown Research & Policy](#))

If we are to reduce our homicide rate and injury from firearms to zero, we need to elevate public safety and public health strategies. The public health approach to firearm violence — embraced by Maryland’s own health department, community groups, academic researchers, and federal health officials — recognizes that prevention must address both underlying risk factors and the physical tools that make violence more lethal. HB 577 aligns with this framework by supporting both behavioral and structural prevention.

LifeBridge Health and the Center for Hope respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 577. This bill supports evidence-based prevention, acknowledges gun violence as a health crisis, and creates pathways to reduce injuries and deaths — particularly among communities disproportionately impacted by firearm violence.

Thank you for your consideration on this critical legislation.

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