

**TO:** Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, Members of the Judiciary Committee

**FROM:** Daniel Webster, ScD, MPH

*Professor and Distinguished Scholar, Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions*

**DATE:** February 25, 2026

**RE:** HB 741-Firearms Dealers and Employees – Required Training and Exam

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I am a tenured professor at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and Distinguished Scholar with the Center for Gun Violence Solutions. I am writing to you in my individual capacity with over 30 years of experience leading research on gun violence and its prevention. The views expressed here are my own and do not necessarily reflect the policies or positions of Johns Hopkins University.

The practices of licensed firearm dealers and their employees can significantly impact the diversion of guns into the underground market for their use in crime. Studies conducted with crime gun trace data from the late 1990s and early 2000s found that 90% of guns traced after recovery from criminal suspects and crime scenes were sold by 5% of licensed gun dealers.<sup>i</sup> Research examining factors associated with the number of guns diverted for use in crime among guns sold by licensed firearm dealers revealed that having unusually large numbers of guns later used in crime could not be fully explained by differences in sales volumes, purchaser demographics, or local crime rates.<sup>ii</sup> Public and law enforcement scrutiny of licensed gun dealers can lead to changes in sales practices that lead to dramatic reductions in guns being diverted for use in crime shortly after retail sale.<sup>iii</sup> Furthermore, policies that limit transparency and accountability by gun dealers can dramatically increase guns being diverted to criminals.<sup>iv, v</sup>

My research that speaks most directly in support of HB 741 examines what happens when undercover stings reveal gun dealers and their employees facilitating illegal straw sales prompting legal action against scofflaw gun dealers. After seeing the positive effects of stings and lawsuits against gun dealers in the Chicago's and Detroit's metropolitan areas,<sup>vi</sup> New York City launched a similar initiative. New York's efforts resulted in 24 licensed firearm dealers settling lawsuits by agreeing to institute a range of changes to their business practices to reduce the diversion of guns to criminals. These changes included criminal background checks of employees and training in the detection, denial, and reporting of illegal straw purchase attempts. We were able to obtain electronic sales data for 10 of the dealers who settled their cases and

underwent these changes to their business practices. Linking granular sales data with data from the NYPD on guns recovered in crime, we documented an 82% reduction in the ratio of crime gun recoveries to guns sold by the dealers who changed their business practices including dealer and employee trainings designed to reduce risky transaction that lead to criminal use of guns.<sup>vii</sup>

Based on the research I have conducted and reviewed, I support the favorable passage of HB 741.

Sincere Regards,



Daniel Webster, ScD, MPH

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<sup>i</sup> Brady Campaign and Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence. "[The Truth About Gun Dealers in America.](#)" Citing data from Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. "Listing of Federal Firearms Licensees (FFLs) - 2014" and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF), Commerce in Firearms in the United States at A-23, February 2000.

<sup>ii</sup> Wintemute GJ, Cook PJ, Wright MA. Risk factors among handgun retailers for frequent and disproportionate sales of guns used in violent and firearm related crimes. *Injury Prevention*. 2005;11(6):357–363. doi: 10.1136/ip.2005.009969. [\[DOI\]](#)

<sup>iii</sup> Webster DW, Vernick JS, Bulzacchelli MT. Effects of a gun dealer's change in sales practices on the supply of guns to criminals. *Journal of Urban Health* 2006; 83:778-787.

<sup>iv</sup> Webster DW, Vernick JS, Bulzacchelli MT, Vettes KA. Recent federal gun laws, gun dealer accountability and the diversion of guns to criminals in Milwaukee. *J Urban Health* 2012;89:87-97.

<sup>v</sup> Webster DW, Vernick JS, Bulzacchelli MT. Effects of state-level firearm seller accountability policies on firearms trafficking. *Journal of Urban Health* 2009;86:525-537. doi: 10.1007/s11524-009-9351-x

<sup>vi</sup> Webster DW, Zeoli AM, Bulzacchelli MT, Vernick JS. Effects of police stings of gun dealers on the supply of new guns to criminals. *Injury Prevention* 2006;12:225-230.

<sup>vii</sup> Webster DW, Vernick JS. "Spurring Responsible Firearms Sales Practices through Litigation: The Impact of New York City's Lawsuits Against Gun Dealers on Interstate Gun Trafficking," p. 123-32 in *Reducing Gun Violence in America: Informing Policy with Evidence and Analysis*, Daniel W. Webster and Jon S. Vernick, Eds., Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013.