

HB 0741

Favorable

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

FROM: Ethan Bartlett

Assistant Research and Policy Advisor, Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions. 750 E Pratt St, Baltimore MD, 21202.

DATE: February 23, 2026

RE: HB 0741-Firearms Dealers and Employees – Required Training and Exam

Hello, my name is Ethan Bartlett. I am an assistant policy advisor for the Center for Gun Violence Solutions at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. I am writing to you in my individual capacity, and the views expressed here are my own and do not necessarily reflect the policies or positions of Johns Hopkins University.

This past Saturday, I attended a memorial service for a friend who was shot and killed in Linthicum last month. His death serves as a reminder that life is precious and should be protected. It also reaffirmed my resolve to effect change so that future families and friends will not have to mourn loved ones lost to gun violence.

Research shows that federal firearm licensees (FFLs) breaking the law are major channels of trafficked and illegally purchased firearms, which are among the most common methods of diverting firearms for use in crime.^{i,ii} Some of these cases involve thousands of trafficked firearms by the same FFL.

Maryland currently holds gun dealers criminally liable for selling a handgun to someone they know or should know is buying a gun on behalf of someone else—often a prohibited purchaser—in what is known as a “straw purchase.” We can all agree that this is a commonsense measure; however, we do not position licensed dealers and their employees well to identify these straw purchasers. Neither federal law nor Maryland law currently requires firearm dealer employees to undergo training to spot illegal sales, such as straw purchases.

Maryland should require gun dealer employees to be trained in how to spot and stop illegal gun sales. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives has acknowledged that training gun dealers to recognize and respond to red flags indicating a possible straw purchase is key to preventing such illegal purchases.ⁱⁱⁱ Several states, including most recently Colorado, have

enacted laws requiring gun dealers and their employees to undergo training to identify and prevent illegal sales like straw purchases.^{iv} States with their own strong regulations and oversight of FFLs have lower rates of firearms being diverted for criminal use than states lacking those regulations.^v

The training requirements in HB 741 will equip licensed dealers and their employees with the skills to more effectively prevent access to lethal means by those who are prohibited from owning them. I simply request that we explore all options with the potential to save the lives of those we hold dear. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Ethan Bartlett, MSPH

ⁱ “Inspections of Firearms Dealers by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.” (2013). U.S. Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General, Evaluation and Inspections Division.

<https://oig.justice.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/reports/ATF/e0405/final.pdf>

ⁱⁱ “National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA): Firearms Trafficking Investigations - Volume Three.” (2024). U.S. Department of Justice. <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/national-firearms-commerce-and-trafficking-assessment-nfcta-firearms-trafficking>

ⁱⁱⁱ “Don't Lie for the Other Guy.” U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). <https://web.archive.org/web/20250102180802/https://www.atf.gov/firearms/dont-lie-other-guy>

^{iv} “Gun Violence Prevention Law Goes Into Effect.” (2025). Colorado House Democrats. <https://www.cohousedems.com/news/gun-violence-prevention-law-goes-into-effect>

^v “Federal Firearms Licensee Theft/Loss Report – 2022. Data Source: Firearms Tracing System.” (2025). U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/federal-firearms-licensee-theftloss-report-2022>