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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

The Honorable Sandy Bartlett
Maryland State House of Delegates
101 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Letter of Support – House Bill 577 – Criminal Law – Firearm Crimes – Machine Gun Convertible Pistols

Dear Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I write in strong support of House Bill 577, which would prohibit the manufacture, sale, transfer, and possession of machine gun convertible pistols in Maryland.

This legislation addresses an emerging and dangerous threat to public safety, which is the increasing availability of semiautomatic pistols that can be easily converted into fully automatic machine guns using inexpensive, easily obtainable conversion devices. As defined in HB577, these are semiautomatic pistols that can be readily converted into a machine gun using common tools and without additional engineering or modification to the trigger mechanism.

The Public Safety Threat

The conversion devices often referred to as “Glock switches” or pistol converters can transform a standard handgun into a weapon capable of firing multiple rounds with a single trigger function — dramatically increasing lethality in seconds. These devices are increasingly trafficked online, including through encrypted messaging platforms, and can be manufactured using 3D printers.

Recent criminal cases in Maryland demonstrate the real and immediate nature of this threat. In Frederick, federal investigators uncovered multiple firearms, machine gun conversion devices, ghost gun components, and hundreds of rounds of ammunition connected to firearms trafficking activity. In prior years, this same individual had already been arrested by a Frederick Police officer while carrying firearms. Had those weapons been easily convertible to machine guns, that single officer could have been grossly outgunned in seconds, creating an extremely high-risk situation for law enforcement and the surrounding community

When a pistol is converted into a machine gun:

- Accuracy decreases while volume of fire increases dramatically
- The likelihood of unintended casualties rises sharply
- Law enforcement response becomes more dangerous and more complex
- Neighborhoods face greater risk of mass-casualty events



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Beyond officer and community safety, these weapons destabilize community safety overall. Machine gun conversion devices are particularly dangerous because they lower the barrier between standard firearm possession and machine gun capability. HB577 appropriately targets that conversion point.

HB577 does not attempt to regulate lawful firearm ownership broadly. Instead, it focuses specifically on pistols designed in a way that allows rapid, simple conversion into machine guns and the devices that enable that conversion.

The bill also includes clear exemptions for military, law enforcement, and certain licensed dealers acting within the scope of lawful activity, ensuring legitimate operational needs remain protected.

Importantly, the bill establishes a forward-looking prohibition date and allows the Department of State Police to implement regulations and publish lists of prohibited models, providing clarity and enforceability.

Conclusion

Maryland has long taken a thoughtful, evidence-based approach to reducing gun violence while respecting lawful ownership. HB577 continues that tradition by addressing a modern, fast-growing threat that did not exist at scale even a decade ago.

Allowing easily convertible machine pistols to proliferate would place law enforcement officers and our residents at unnecessary and unacceptable risk. This legislation is a proactive step to prevent further harm and protect our communities.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on House Bill 577.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to public safety in Maryland.

Sincerely,

Michael O'Connor
Mayor, City of Frederick