



VICTIM SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

February 17, 2021

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Support - SB624 - Public Safety - Untraceable and Undetectable Firearms

Dear Chairman Smith:

Senate Bill 624 addresses the need to monitor and control the use of “do-it-yourself” (DIY) or “ghost guns” by extending the definition of regulated firearms to include certain unfinished frames or receivers. Additionally, the bill requires that all firearms are marked with a unique serial number and individuals possessing such firearms need to maintain a certain log. Penalties are imposed for violations in the manufacturing, possessing, selling, and transferring of these firearms.

The Montgomery County Victim Services Advisory Board (VSAB) advises the County Council and County Executive on assisting victims and their family members who experience violent crimes including domestic violence, sexual assault and homicide. Montgomery County’s homicide rate increased 167% in 2020 compared to the same time in 2019. (<https://wjla.com/news/local>, Sept. 9, 2020). The police were also concerned with the increase in violence in domestic violence cases they investigated. (<https://wtop.com/montgomery-county>, Oct. 16, 2020). The lack of ability to track the weapons used in such violence puts victims at significantly greater risk.

The Montgomery County Police discovered 73 ghost guns in 2020 compared to six such guns found in 2019. (<https://wtop.com/maryland/2021/01/maryland-state-county-lawmakers-target-ghost-guns/>, Jan. 19, 2021). In 2020, they arrested 55 adults on charges of possessing or selling ghost guns, and three juveniles on charges of possessing them. (<https://bethesdamagazine.com/bethesda-beat/government/county-might-try-to-ban-undetectable-ghost-guns/>, Jan. 15, 2021). In late 2020, the attorneys general of D.C., Maryland, and Virginia joined 16 other states in filing a lawsuit to crack down on DIY/ghost guns. (<https://wtop.com/local/2020/12/dc-maryland-and-virginia-go-after-atf-to-regulate-ghost-guns/>, Dec. 24, 2020). Regulation of these firearms is long overdue.

VSAB asks the committee to issue a favorable report in Senate Bill 624.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Pontzer & Juanita Rogers
VSAB Co-chairs

Department of Health and Human Services