



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 1, 2021

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 638 - Public Safety - Untraceable and Undetectable Firearms**

**Summary:** HB 638 requires manufacturers to have consistent serialization on unfinished and unfinished receivers at the point of sale and requires a Handgun Qualifying License for the sale of unfinished receivers.

**Overview:** A ghost gun is a firearm made by an individual, not a licensed gun maker, without serialization, either by a kit or home manufacturing methods. In order for the gun to function, it must have a “finished” receiver or frame. 3D printed guns are an example, but not the only type of ghost gun.

It is against federal law to buy a receiver without a background, but individuals can buy one that is 80 percent finished with only their credit card information. From there, an individual can make the rest of the firearm with a kit available online or 3D printing parts.

Gun industry manufacturers have even supplied the market with machines whose sole purpose is finishing receivers. The Ghost Gunner 3D, for example, is a milling machine exclusively designed and marketed to turn raw materials into a fully functional firearm.

This means that anyone, even those who have been deemed unfit to possess a firearm, could be armed anywhere and at any time. Not only can an individual who is otherwise restricted gain access to a deadly weapon, organized crime and gangs have the ability to arm individuals.

New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, California, and Washington D.C. have all taken action to regulate or ban ghost guns, and several other states are considering similar legislation.

Communities of color have been most impacted by the proliferation of ghost guns. Data compiled by the Center for Disease Control shows that Black residents represented 29% of Maryland’s population but represented 57% of the victims killed by firearms in 2018.

Individuals have lawfully been making guns at home for their own private use for centuries; this bill allows them to still do that. This bill intentionally keeps the process to buy receivers consistent for gun dealers in the state.

## Ghost Guns in Maryland

Sales of ghost gun kits have skyrocketed during the pandemic. On some websites, the kits are on backorder for two months. In Maryland alone, sales of ghost gun kits have increased by almost a factor of four. Between 2016 and 2019, more than 12,000 ghost gun kits were shipped to the state.

As of December 1, 2020, Baltimore police have recovered over three times the number of ghost guns than they recovered during all of 2019. About a quarter of the ghost guns recovered in Maryland in 2019 were recovered in Baltimore City.

In the first three months of 2020 alone, 62 ghost guns were recovered by Maryland police, compared to 117 in all of 2019.

## Specific Incidents with Ghost Guns in Maryland

- The FBI arrested three men in Maryland on January 16, 2020, for planning to incite racial violence using homemade guns. The men had made an assault style ghost gun which they planned to use at the January 20, 2020 gun rights rally in Richmond and specifically discussed using the guns to kill police officers and to encourage a “race war.”
- In December of 2019, a man living in Silver Spring pled guilty for selling ghost guns to prohibited purchasers.
- In August of 2019, a man was arrested for possessing a loaded ghost gun. The man was already on probation for a prior handgun violation in Baltimore.
- Between September and November 2018, a Baltimore man who had previously been convicted for being a felon in possession of a firearm committed 10 armed robberies at five separate banks in Baltimore, White Marsh, Bel Air, and Arbutus. He also committed robberies at liquor stores in Dundalk, Middle River, and Baltimore. The gun discharged by the man in two of these robberies was an untraceable ghost gun.
- In February of 2018, a Montgomery County high schooler brought a homemade handgun to his school. The 17 -year -old was also in the middle of making an assault style rifle at home.

**Conclusion:** Ghost guns pose an extreme safety risk for Marylanders and those across the country. Passing HB 638 will help ensure that domestic abusers, terrorists, gang members, potential school shooters, and others prohibited from owning firearms cannot circumvent the background check process, while still allowing hobbyists to continue producing firearms for their own private use.