



BILL NO: House Bill 638
TITLE: Public Safety - Untraceable and Undetectable Firearms
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
HEARING DATE: March 1, 2021
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) is the state domestic violence coalition that brings together victim service providers, allied professionals, and concerned individuals for the common purpose of reducing intimate partner and family violence and its harmful effects on our citizens. **MNADV urges the House Judiciary Proceedings Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 638.**

House Bill 638 would require a serial number for unfinished frames or receivers for firearms. Currently the sale of these unfinished frames or receivers are unregulated and they are a necessary component to build a “ghost gun.” These “ghost guns” can be purchased online, built at home, are untraceable because they lack serial numbers, and circumvent the entire background check and training required for other firearms. HB 638 does not prohibit “ghost guns” it merely requires that they be subject to the already existing requirements for gun ownership in Maryland law.

Maryland law currently prohibits certain persons from owning or possessing firearms including when previously convicted of certain crimes, when under a civil protective order, or pursuant to an Extreme Risk Protective Order. Since “ghost guns” bypass the background check process and are unregulated and untraceable, the otherwise prohibited persons can legally obtain fully functioning firearms. HB 638 seeks to ensure that these “ghost guns” are traceable and that existing law apply to owners and dealers of these weapons.

Higher rates of firearm ownership correlate to a higher rate of domestic violence homicide according to a 2019 study.¹ There is a 65% higher incidence rate of domestic firearm homicide in the states with the highest firearm ownership compared to states with lower ownership rates.² Since women are the most common victims of domestic violence homicide, they are most at risk with increased gun ownership.³ Black women are disproportionately the victims of domestic violence homicide with a firearm with an

¹ Kivisto, A.J., Magee, L.A., Phalen, P.L., Ray, B.R. (2019). Firearm ownership and domestic versus nondomestic homicide in the U.S. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, Abstract: [https://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797\(19\)30197-7/fulltext#articleInformation](https://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797(19)30197-7/fulltext#articleInformation)

² Merovsh, Sarah. “Gun Ownership Rates Tied to Domestic Homicides, but Not Other Killings, Study Finds,” NY Times, (July 22, 2019) <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/22/us/gun-ownership-violence-statistics.html>

³ *Id.*

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estimated 51.3% of Black adult female homicides found to be related to intimate partner violence.⁴ The risk of homicide for women increases by 500% with the presence of a gun in the home.⁵

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence** urges a favorable report on **HB 638**.

⁴ Petrosky, E., Blair, J.M., Betz, C.J., Fowler, K.A., Jack, S.P.D., & Lyons, B.H. (2017). Racial and ethnic differences in homicides of adult women and the role of intimate partner violence - United States, 2003-2014. MMWR. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 66(28), 741-746. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/66/wr/pdfs/mm6628a1.pdf>.

⁵ The National Domestic Violence Hotline, Retrieved 1/29/21, <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/safety-planning-around-guns-and-firearms/>

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