

Oral Testimony on HB638, Untraceable and Undetectable Firearms

Testimony by Peter Benjamin on behalf of Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence

Good afternoon Mr. Chair, Madam Vice Chair, members of the committee. I am Peter Benjamin and I am testifying today as a member of Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence. I live in the Town of Garrett Park and I am a former mayor of the town. Garrett Park is in district 18, and we are pleased to have Delegate Shetty represent us on this committee.

A few years ago, not many of us had even heard of ghost guns. Today we are experiencing an exponential rise in the use of these firearms. These weapons do not have serial numbers, are home made by individuals from kits or with 3D printers and are thus untraceable when recovered after a crime and can be undetectable by a magnetometer. If they are untraceable, it is much harder to connect a criminal to a crime in which the gun was used. If they are undetectable, they can be brought into a government building or onto an airplane where they can be used for illegal purposes.

Ghost guns are not just handguns. Assault weapons can also be purchased in kits. A person can obtain such a gun without a background check and could even be a minor. The ability to construct ghost guns by almost any individual circumvents the requirements of existing gun sense legislation. Ghost guns, including assault weapons, have been used by people who could not pass a background check in numerous shootings with multiple victims. Individuals have also begun to produce ghost guns for sale.

It is critical that legislation be passed to prohibit firearms that cannot be detected by screening systems currently in use, that all firearms have a traceable serial number, and that a person purchasing a gun assembly kit or purchasing a gun assembled from such a kit pass a background check. As presently proposed, HB638 has language regarding record keeping of the owners of the firearms associated with the serial numbers that Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence believes might be deliberately misconstrued to allow sales of ghost guns without records of the transfers. My written testimony contains the language suggested by Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence as a replacement of one sentence in the present version to eliminate this possibility. With the inclusion of that change I fully support passage of HB638.