

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL HB0211 - FAVORABLE
Crimes - Firearms - Straw Purchase Participant Penalty

TO: Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon, and
members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Chris Apple
7001 Cradlerock Farm Court
Columbia, MD 21045
District 13

Feb 1, 2022

Because straw purchases are classified as a misdemeanor, police have limited capability to pursue and apprehend offenders. Previous years' testimony show that straw purchasers aren't always arrested, even when there is evidence that a straw purchase likely occurred. Classifying this offense as a felony would grant the police greater power to arrest straw purchasers.

Straw purchases are a large source of guns recovered from firearms offenses and violent crimes. One study showed that of 1402 inmates incarcerated for a firearms offense, 39% acquired their guns from friends or family members.¹ Another showed that "32 percent of juvenile inmates had asked someone, typically a friend or family member, to straw purchase a gun for them."² Reducing straw purchases may mean that fewer guns find their way into the hands of criminals.

While crime guns come from many sources, increasing the penalty for straw purchases would weaken one link in the chain. Stiffer penalties may act as a deterrent for would-be buyers, and greater police arrest powers might help incarcerate those who still choose to make a straw purchase. I respectfully urge you to issue a favorable report for HB0211.

¹ Webster, Daniel and Jon Vernick, editors. *Reducing Gun Violence in America*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. p 110

² Ibid. p 146