



Maine Gun Safety Coalition Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 677, An Act to Update the Statutory Definition of "Machine Gun" and Prohibit Possession of a Rapid-fire Device.

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and esteemed members of the committee. My name is Nacole Palmer, and I serve as executive director of the Maine Gun Safety Coalition. I am respectfully asking this committee to vote Ought To Pass on LD 677, An Act to Update the Statutory Definition of "Machine Gun" and Prohibit Possession of a Rapid-fire Device.

LD 677 will restrict after-market firearm modification devices that can convert semiautomatic weapons into dangerous machineguns with a high rate of fire. Some firearms modified by these devices can fire up to 1200 bullets per minute - significantly higher than the rate of fire for most automatic weapons issued to the military¹ - and have been increasingly used in shootings across the country. Between 2019 and 2023, the number of auto sears recovered from crime guns rose by 784 percent².

This legislation is narrowly tailored to prohibit only accessories and modifications that will make firearms more dangerous and less controllable, such as bump stocks, switches, and autosears. While automatic weapons and many types of conversion apparatuses are restricted under federal law, these restrictions are insufficient in three ways:

1. Federal law and regulations do not cover all machine gun conversion and rapid fire devices. For example, manual trigger cranks and binary trigger systems are not prohibited federally. Bump stocks, used to horrifying effect in the 2017 Las Vegas shooting, were illegal under federal regulations for years until the ban was overturned on a technicality last year.
2. State law enforcement agencies and state prosecutors are not able to enforce federal prohibitions on their own. Only federal prosecutors in federal court can prosecute these cases, at their own discretion. With over 11,000 auto sears alone recovered in 2023², federal prosecutors are likely to be unable and unwilling to bring charges for all of these cases.

1. <https://www.atf.gov/news/press-releases/fort-worth-manufacturer-charged-glock-switch-case>

2. <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/nfcta-volume-iv-part-v-%E2%80%93-pmf-updates-and-new-analysis/download.7>

3. The federal executive branch could change the rules that currently prohibit machinegun conversion devices, without going through Congress. This would leave Maine and Maine law enforcement with no protections from these dangerous devices.

These modification devices are designed and explicitly marketed as a way to quickly and easily get around legal prohibitions against automatic weapons. One online vendor selling “Hell-Fire Trigger Systems” like the one used in the Robb Elementary School massacre in Uvalde, Texas³ uses the following ad copy: “If you have ever considered converting to FULL AUTO SELECT FIRE and red tape or jail time got in the way, then the Hell-Fire Trigger System is for you. ATF Legal, the Hell-Fire installs in seconds behind the trigger.”⁴

These devices have been used in many recent high-profile shootings. In addition to the unspeakable tragedies in Uvalde and Las Vegas, dangerous criminals have used weapons outfitted with rapid fire modification devices in shootouts with law enforcement, such as when a man in Fargo, North Dakota, outgunned law enforcement, killing one officer and injuring two others, with a semiautomatic rifle outfitted with a binary trigger in July of 2023⁵. In the years prior, a glock switch was used in a shooting in Houston, Texas in January 2022 that injured three police officers. In October 2021, a person resisting arrest killed one police officer and injured another firing a gun accessorized with an auto sear⁶.

LD 677 would protect Maine and its citizens by restricting devices that have been used in mass shootings and other horrific incidents of gunfire across the country, including in New England. Please vote Ought To Pass on this piece of life-saving legislation.

³. <https://castro.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/congressman-castro-leads-call-for-atf-to-prohibit-sales-of-hellfire-trigger-devices>

⁴. <https://www.firequest.com/HE2000.html>

⁵. <https://apnews.com/article/binary-triggers-fargo-shooting-08391f506b264bc3de25ce7b4efd52b1>

⁶. <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/crime/article/More-Houston-shootings-involve-Glock-16945519.php>