

LD 1454

Senator Deschambeault, Representative Warren, and distinguished members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Policy

Joanne R. Sterling

Rep. Michael Sylvester
State Senator Ben Chipman

Thank you for the opportunity to testify for LD 1454. I am a resident of Peaks Island, which is part of Portland, and my legislators are Rep. Michael Sylvester and State Senator Ben Chipman.

I am in favor of this proposed legislation that would prohibit the manufacture, possession, assembly, import, sale or transfer of untraceable and undetectable firearms in Maine.

Because they are unserialized, ghost guns are untraceable. The untraceability of ghost guns is one of their selling points and makes them attractive to criminals and gun traffickers trying to avoid being held responsible when their guns are recovered by law enforcement.

Because of ATF's current interpretation of the law, the core building blocks for a ghost gun can be acquired with no background check and no questions asked, which enables people to circumvent state laws regulating assault weapons. These are guns that are either downloadable online and can be made at home, not able to be detected by metal detectors, or most importantly assembled through the purchase of an unfinished frame or receiver.

Gaps in federal law that allow the manufacture, sale and possession of ghost guns, make it easy for prohibited purchasers to evade state and federal laws and access firearms that cannot be traced by law enforcement. President Biden recently called for action to address this issue at the federal level through executive action, directing the Department of Justice to revise rules that have allowed the market for ghost guns to flourish. However, it will take time for federal rule changes to take effect and those changes may well be subject to legal challenges, further delaying their enforcement.

This bill is an opportunity for Maine to take action now by passing a strong state law that addresses the rising threat of ghost guns and ensures these dangerous weapons don't threaten the safety of our communities. Ghost Guns, Downloadable Guns & Undetectable Guns undermine gun safety laws and thwart law enforcement, threatening public safety.

Convicted felons, violent domestic abusers, and other people who are legally prohibited from purchasing firearms can avoid a background check and access guns by buying unfinished frames and receivers and other parts and kits available online that easily enable them to finish the frames or receivers and convert them into functional firearms.

- 3-D Printing and other emerging technologies allow for the DIY manufacture of entire firearms and firearm components. With recent advancements in technology, desktop 3-D printers are becoming relatively inexpensive and increasingly popular. Ghost guns have been used to perpetrate mass shootings and other acts of gun violence.

Thank you for your time today and your service to the state of Maine. I urge you to support LD 1454.