



In support of HD4420 - a forward thinking, comprehensive Firearms Modernization Act

Massachusetts has long been applauded for firearm safety laws and ranks sixth in the nation in gun law strength. MA also has the lowest homicide rate by firearm in the country other than Hawaii.

Recently, national challenges and rulings have put us at risk of the erosion of and challenges to existing state laws. It is now that we need to shore up and broaden our existing firearms laws to protect against these challenges and create new, necessary laws that address technological changes. The majority of Americans are in favor of stronger firearm regulation to curb gun violence.

Concealed Carry – New York State Rifle and Pistol Association, Inc., v Bruen

This decision by the Supreme Court made it easier for people to obtain a license to carry a firearm publicly. Although MA addressed the decision immediately, the Firearms Modernization Act does more to curtail that threat.

Under Bruen states can still impose restrictions on spaces where firearms can be carried and this Act does just that excluding carry from all educational institutions, federal and state government spaces, polling and ballot locations, and other places where there are children and private and commercial property unless owner permission is obtained.

Without limiting carry in sensitive areas, we could see MA residents going about their daily lives among armed individuals thus creating fear, intimidation, and ambiguity in law enforcement situations. Insufficient carry laws increase homicide rates, often lead to intimidation of legislators and others and increase violent crime rates. More firearms “at the ready” is a recipe for more violence as seen in other states.

Ghost Guns and 3D Printed Guns - Unregistered, Untraceable, Undetectable

Ghost guns are guns that are fabricated by individuals from parts that are then machined to make a real gun. The parts are not serialized with a number, you do not need a background check to buy the components and they do not exist in any system. They present a challenge to law enforcement and they are increasingly discovered at crime scenes.

3D printed guns can be made from a 3D printer with all the same issues as ghost guns, plus they are not detectable at screening machines.

Ghost guns present a substantial profit opportunity for those willing to make them and sell them to the criminal element. This bill addresses the criminalization of ghost guns and 3D printed guns ghost as the escalating threat they are in our towns and cities. We would be remiss not to join other states in banning both.

Assault Weapons Ban

We are among the ten states that have an Assault Weapons Ban. This bill would strengthen our ban by outlawing conversion devices, raising the age of possession of semi-automatic long guns and broadening the definition and categories of assault weapons.

AR -15 and other “assault style” weapons are the weapons of choice in many mass shootings and are costing us countless numbers of lives across the country. They are a weapon that creates massive destruction and injury in seconds, and they have no place in a civilized society.

States with Assault Weapons Bans are facing challenges from rifle associations regarding the constitutionality of their assault weapons bans.

Extreme Risk Protection Orders (Red Flag Laws)

We have an existing ERPO, but this law expands the profiles of people who can request an ERPO. The expansion includes employers, licensed healthcare providers and school administrators. When we look at most mass shootings, we know that the empowerment of these profiles could have made the difference between life and death for some people. We need to empower the people who see the behavior most often so that they can act on the threat.

Crime Data Analysis

Using data to understand crime is essential to sound policy making. This bill directs the Criminal Justice Services to analyze and collect data on a wide range of firearm crimes and make that data available to the public.

Commission on Innovative Technology

A commission to investigate innovative technologies such as microstamping and biometric firearms is also part of the proposed bill. Microstamping is a significant development whereby the firing pin imprints a unique number on a shell casing so that recovered casings can be traced to point of origin thus helping solve gun crimes.

Biometric gun technology makes a firearm only able to be fired by the owner which obviously would reduce gun theft, unintentional shootings and some impulsive suicides.

A Commission would be established with a report due out in September of 2024 to research these technologies.

Commission on community-based violence prevention

This provision establishes a commission of diverse stakeholders to evaluate and assess community violence intervention programs which have been so successful in MA. Community intervention programs work at many levels in an individual's life to prevent involvement in crimes or repetition of criminal behavior. They work to mitigate the obstacles and barriers to people having successful recoveries from crime patterns. This Commission will examine the funding structure of the programs to be sure that strong programs are treated equally and funded appropriately.

Inspections

And certainly not least, Massachusetts State Police will now oversee inspecting gun dealers, strengthening dealer licensing and training standards for dealers. Local police did not have the capacity to inspect gun dealers and inspections have not been done properly for years.

Grandmothers Against Gun Violence MA and Grandparents Uniting for Gun Safety stand behind the provisions of HD4420 and hope that whatever the path, another bill would encompass these provisions. With the current national climate regarding firearms the way it is, this is no time to be provincial only in our regard for our firearms laws.