



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION LEGISLATION
BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND HOMELAND
SECURITY
NOVEMBER 28, 2023**

The Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) is a professional association of over 25,000 physicians, residents, and medical students across all clinical disciplines, organizations, and practice settings. The Medical Society is committed to advocating on behalf of patients, to provide them a better health care system, and on behalf of physicians, to help them provide the best care possible. On behalf of our patients whose lives have been forever changed or tragically cut short by firearms, we submit this testimony in support of several critical pieces of legislation that seek to address the public health crisis posed by gun violence.

Gun violence is a public health crisis. As with all other public health areas, evidence-based interventions are needed for reducing injuries and deaths from firearms. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 48,830 people died from gun-related injuries in the United States in 2021, the most recent year for which complete data is available.¹ This figure includes gun suicides, gun homicides, and accidental shootings. The data indicate that firearms fatalities are increasing, and disparities are widening with youth, males, and Black individuals experiencing the highest firearm homicide rates.² Tragically, firearm injuries are now the leading cause of death for children and youth in the United States, representing 19% of all deaths of children 18 years and younger in 2021.³

The daily carnage from firearms does not need to be our reality; overwhelming evidence clearly shows that strong gun laws can and do prevent gun violence.⁴ No where in the country is the

¹ Gramlich, J. (2023, April 26). *What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.* Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/04/26/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/>

² Gramlich, J. (2023, April 26). *What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S.* Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/04/26/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-us/>

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Underlying Cause of Death Database. <https://wonder.cdc.gov/ucd-icd10-expanded.html>

⁴ *Gun safety policies save lives.* Everytown Research & Policy. (2023, May 8). <https://everytownresearch.org/rankings/>

causal relationship between strong gun laws and gun violence rates more evident than here in the Commonwealth. Massachusetts ranks among the states with the strongest gun laws, while experiencing the least amount of gun violence per capita in the entire country.⁵ The Commonwealth has prioritized gun safety in our laws by requiring background checks for all gun sales, enhancing regulations for licenses to carry, establishing restrictions on firearm ownership among dangerous individuals, and more. While Massachusetts has made great strides to curb gun violence, we are not immune to this epidemic. In an average year, 255 people die and 577 are wounded by guns in Massachusetts.⁶ Gun deaths and injuries cost our state \$3.5 billion each year, of which \$85.4 million is paid by taxpayers.⁷ Though they tend to get less public attention than gun homicides, suicides have long accounted for the majority of U.S. gun deaths. In Massachusetts, 55% of gun fatalities are suicides.⁸

The public health crisis of gun violence can and should be addressed through appropriate laws, regulation, education, and safety practices. The MMS is guided by the principles of reducing the number of deaths, disabilities, and injuries attributable to firearms and making firearm ownership safer, as well as promoting education relative to firearms, ammunition, and violence prevention for physicians, other health professionals, and the public. To those ends, we support the following bills:

- **H.2360/S.1509, *An Act relative to 3D printed guns and ghost guns***, would allow Massachusetts to effectively regulate the production of 3D printed weapons and “do-it-yourself” firearms. Recent advancements in technology have facilitated the production of untraceable “ghost guns” using 3D printers, as well as the assembly of firearms from individually acquired components. Apart from the public safety hazards associated with unregistered and untraceable firearms, these weapons also pose a significant danger to the user due to the potential for explosions resulting from improper assembly or the utilization of plastic parts. Nevertheless, the assembly of a firearm from such parts does not violate any state or federal laws. This legislation would bring the

⁵ Gun safety policies save lives. Everytown Research & Policy. (2023, May 8).

<https://everytownresearch.org/rankings/>

⁶ Gun violence in Massachusetts - everystat.org. (n.d.). <https://everystat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Gun-Violence-in-Massachusetts-2.pdf>

⁷ Gun violence in Massachusetts - everystat.org. (n.d.). <https://everystat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Gun-Violence-in-Massachusetts-2.pdf>

⁸ Gun violence in Massachusetts - everystat.org. (n.d.). <https://everystat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Gun-Violence-in-Massachusetts-2.pdf>

state statute (M.G.L. c. 140 § 121) into line with these new technologies to keep the public safe from these dangerous weapons.

- **H.2365, *An Act requiring live fire practice for a firearms license***, would require at least five hours of live firearms training, including the discharge of at least 50 rounds of ammunition, to obtain a firearms license. Updating the firearms training curriculum to include live fire practice will improve public safety by ensuring all licensed gun owners know how to safely use and handle firearms.
- **H.2307/S.1492, *An Act relative to crime gun data reporting and analysis***, would direct the Secretary of Public Safety to develop a biennial report analyzing firearm crime and trace data, along with other critical statistics. This legislation would improve the collection of gun violence data to allow the Commonwealth to understand the root causes of gun violence in all its forms, so that evidence-based solutions can be developed to prevent future tragedies.
- **H.2361, *An Act banning semi-automatic firearms***, would update the state's definition of assault weapon to include any rifle or shotgun containing a semiautomatic mechanism. Such firearms are unreasonably dangerous due to their extreme lethality and potential for harm, and the Commonwealth should act to protect the public from these weapons.
- **H.2358, *An Act updating the Massachusetts assault weapons ban***, would clarify the state's assault weapons ban address modern features that make these weapons so lethal. The Massachusetts assault weapons ban prohibits the sale of specific and name-brand weapons and explicitly bans copies or duplicates of those weapons. However, so-called "state compliant" versions have been manufactured by making minor adjustments to various parts of the weapon. These modifications do not make the weapon any less deadly. This legislation will ensure the intent of the Commonwealth's assault weapons ban cannot be circumvented.
- **H.2362, *An Act establishing an institute within the Department of Public Health***, would establish the "Massachusetts Firearm Violence Institute" within the Department of Public Health to undertake activities related to reducing gun violence in the Commonwealth. Research on gun violence prevention has lagged far behind research in other critical public health areas, even as concerns about gun violence have risen. Creating a Firearm Violence Institute in Massachusetts will help provide the answers needed to create effective policies and programs to reduce gun violence.

- **H.2399, *An Act relative to a voluntary do-not-sell list for firearms purchases***, would permit individuals who are concerned about suicidal thoughts to voluntarily request to be put on a “do-not-sell” list for firearms purchases. This legislation would allow individuals facing a mental health crisis to be proactive about restricting their access to firearms so they can protect themselves and their loved ones from the devastating consequences of firearm injury or suicide.
- **S.1495, *An Act relative to firearms and firearms violence***, would create a Violence Prevention Trust Fund to support an annual municipal grant program targeting youth and gun violence reduction. The Medical Society supports a holistic approach to ending gun violence, and that includes addressing the root causes of violence and improving the safety and well-being of our youth. This legislation is in alignment with these goals.
- **S.1508, *An Act to strengthen gun control***, will close dangerous loopholes in Massachusetts gun laws but prohibiting gun dealers from selling specified components that could be used to assemble an untraceable firearm (i.e. ghost guns) or a banned assault weapon. It would also require the suspension of gun licenses upon a court issuing a harassment prevention order under M.G.L. 258E. Allowing perpetrators of harassment to have access to firearms can intensify the risk of serious injury for the victim. S.1508 would give courts an important tool to keep victims of harassment safe from gun violence.

The MMS recognizes that there is no single solution to ending gun violence, but there are commonsense steps we can take to reduce the scourge of firearm injury and death. Each of these bills represents an opportunity to advance gun violence prevention and save lives in the Commonwealth. For all these reasons, the Massachusetts Medical Society urges favorable action on these pieces of legislation. Thank you for your consideration.