



**Testimony submitted to the
House Committee on Ways and Means
In Support of HD4607, An Act Modernizing Firearm Laws
By Art Desloges, LWVMA Gun Violence Prevention Legislative Specialist
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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA) supports HD4607, An Act Modernizing Firearm Laws which would regulate ghost guns, update the assault weapons ban, and prohibit firearms in schools, polling places and government buildings, among other measures.

The Commonwealth prides itself as a national model of comprehensive gun violence prevention laws. Statistically, we have the lowest gun death rate nationwide. Gun Violence Archive reports 83 people killed and 221 people injured by firearms in the Commonwealth year to date.¹ We must get to zero—even one person lost to gun violence is too many.

Ghost guns are a dangerous and rising threat to the health and safety of all residents of Massachusetts. Those making them circumvent the firearm licensing and background check process required in the Commonwealth. 3D printed guns and ghost guns, also known as “80% frames and receivers; are untraceable because they don’t contain serial numbers and are unlicensed and unregulated. Ghost guns have been seized by police departments in every corner of the Commonwealth. The Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) reported 316 ghost guns were recovered from crimes in 2022, a 75% increase from 2021.² As of August 2023, Springfield police had recovered 26 ghost guns used in crimes.³

The Biden administration instituted a new federal rule in 2022 changing the definition of a firearm to include parts such as a frame and receiver to address the 24,000 ghost guns recovered in crimes across the US from 2016-2020—a 398% increase.⁴ On August 8, 2023, the US Supreme Court placed a hold on a ruling by a federal judge in Texas to invalidate the rule. The ghost gun regulation remains in effect while the decision is appealed in the 5th US Circuit Court of Appeals.

As is the case on so many pertinent issues, Massachusetts can’t wait for federal action. Thirteen states currently restrict ghost guns, including California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware,

¹ <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/>

² Massachusetts’ Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, Recovery of Crime Guns in Massachusetts 2022, June 2023, <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/SD2669>.

³ Kittle, Glenn, “Police, lawmakers working to crack down on ghost guns”, Western Mass News, August 9, 2023, <https://www.westernmassnews.com/2023/08/09/police-lawmakers-working-crack-down-ghost-guns/>.

⁴ Everytown for Gun Safety Research and Policy, “Which States Regulate Ghost Guns?”, Everytown for Gun Safety, January 2023, <https://everytownresearch.org/rankings/law/ghost-guns-regulated/>.

Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington state, plus the District of Columbia. The Commonwealth must be next.

LWVMA reasserts our demand for common sense gun safety legislation at the local, state, and federal levels to allow all people to live safely and with confidence in their personal and community security. This right includes people living in communities where systemic racism and disenfranchisement contributes to a near constant threat of gun violence.

Curbing gun violence is a critical matter of public safety, public health, and public confidence. The League of Women Voters believes that the proliferation of handguns and semi-automatic assault weapons in the United States is a major health and safety threat to all. The League supports strong measures to limit the accessibility and regulate the ownership of these weapons by private citizens. The League supports regulating firearms for consumer safety.

The League supports licensing procedures for gun ownership by private citizens to include a waiting period for background checks, personal identity verification, gun safety education, and annual license renewal—most of which we have in Massachusetts already. We need to enforce these procedures for ghost guns. The League supports allocation of resources to better regulate and monitor gun dealers.

LWVMA, representing 3,000 members across 44 local Leagues from Cape Cod to the Berkshires, supports violence prevention programs in all communities and action to support public and private development and coordination of programs that emphasize the primary prevention of violence.

The League also supports the active role of government and social institutions in preventing violent behavior and the allocation of public monies in government programs to prevent violence.

For all these reasons, the LWVMA urges you to expeditiously vote this legislation favorably out of committee and support its immediate passage.

Thank you for your consideration.