



Representatives Richard Dell'Aquila

Sponsor Testimony: House Bill 346

House Criminal Justice Committee

November 19th, 2024

Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Williams, Ranking Member Brown and Members of the Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on HB 346, a bill to prohibit the manufacture of auto sears.

So, first, what is an auto sear? These are dime-sized plastic devices that can be quickly installed onto semi-automatic handguns (and perhaps rifles), overriding the gun's trigger bar and allowing fully automatic fire with just one trigger pull. This can modify a firearm to discharge 30 rounds in approximately 2 seconds, according to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF).

Although fully automatic firearms are prohibited by state and federal law without special licensing, this conversion device has been increasingly found by local and federal law enforcement. The danger is that free software is now available online that allows an individual with a 3D printer to create these devices in just a few minutes.

With the increased prevalence of 3D printing, along with the decreased cost of owning and operating 3D printers in recent years, these devices used to modify the internal operation and increase the lethality of firearms have been cheaper and more accessible than ever. In the fall of 2023, for example, the U.S. Marshall's Service in Cleveland made several gun violation arrests, including one in which they took 28 auto sears off the street.

Given the huge increase in reported machine gun related incidents since 2019, along with the increased rate of federal converted machine gun cases seized from 300 in 2020 to over 1500 in 2021, the urgency is manifest to address these low-cost methods of illegal gun modifications to protect our families and communities.

Weapons designed as fully automatic machine guns are built with barrels meeting higher standards and with better materials than a semiautomatic pistol barrel. They can be lined with chrome and are intended to be switched out to prevent overheating and warping of the barrel. By contrast, a short semiautomatic pistol barrel will be more prone to warping, thereby causing a blockage preventing the discharged rounds from exiting, and terminating in an explosion of the had gun. The handgun has now become a hand grenade.

HB 346 prohibits a person from knowingly manufacturing an auto sear, and provides certain exceptions to the offense. The penalty for an offense is a fifth-degree felony.

In doing so, the legislation modifies the statutory definition of dangerous ordnance to include an auto sear, which is defined as any part or combination of parts that is designed to convert a weapon to automatically discharge more than one round without manual reloading, by a single function of the trigger. A dangerous ordnance, in part, means any part or combination of parts that is intended by the owner for use in converting any firearm or other device into a dangerous ordnance, including an auto sear.

Thank you for your consideration and I would be pleased to respond to your question.