



LARRY HOGAN  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MARYLAND  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

April 8, 2022

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Maryland Senate  
H-107 State House  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones  
Speaker of the House of Delegates  
H-101 State House  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Speaker Jones:

In accordance with Article II, Section 17(c) of the Maryland Constitution, I am allowing Senate Bill 387/House Bill 425 - *Public Safety - Untraceable Firearms* to become law without my signature.

Violent crime remains the most urgent issue facing Baltimore City—and the most pressing concern for Marylanders—but as the legislative session reaches its final hours, no action has been taken on our administration's emergency legislation to hold violent criminals accountable. After the deadliest January in nearly 50 years, Baltimore City is already on pace to exceed 300 homicides yet again. Some of those lost during this legislative session include:

- 29-year-old **DaShawn McGrier** was working with the Safe Streets program when he was killed in a triple homicide. "He knew that violence and trauma were present in the community, and he wanted to change that," a spokeswoman for Living Classrooms said.
- 66-year-old **Clarence Buckner** was murdered inside of his own home. "We were there for each other," his wife, Elizabeth, said. "He was my backbone, I was his."
- 70-year-old **Linda Dennis** was found dead outside the back door of her home just blocks away from the Pimlico Race Course. Just hours later, 50-year-old **Monique Billinger**, a loyal church-goer, was shot and killed in West Baltimore.
- 44-year-old **Chesley Patterson**, the general manager of La Scala in Little Italy, was fatally shot in Fells Point.
- **Cheryl McCormack**, a 51-year old grandmother, who was working as a DoorDash driver, was killed during a robbery in Northeast Baltimore.

- On Valentine's Day, 55-year old **Sinthia Grace** was shot and killed while standing at a bus stop. Also that day, 16-year-old **Montrell Batteast** was killed on South Hanover Street.
- A quadruple shooting in Howard Park took three lives: **Jawan Hall**, 25, and **Darian Savoy** and **Timothy Brown Jr.**, both 26. "It's sad," the owner of a nearby convenience store said. "It's really not safe here no more."
- Earlier this week, 40-year old **Sophia Wilks** was shot and killed while her children were inside her home. "It hurts because she was so young, young and nice children," her neighbor said.

The people of Baltimore City continue to demand action to get violent shooters off the streets and out of their neighborhoods.

For eight years, our administration has worked to give law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges the tools they need. We have brought together federal, state, and local partners to conduct surge operations throughout the city, resulting in hundreds of arrests of violent felons—Operation Washout being the latest example. Most recently, in coordination with U.S. Attorney Erek L. Barron, we announced resources to provide additional prosecutors and staff for the United States Attorney's office for the District of Maryland. We are providing resources to expand the Baltimore Police Department's (BPD) Warrant Apprehension Task Force—the number one request from Mayor Brandon Scott. We have also ramped up tracking of all open warrants for violent criminals, and are providing ongoing investigative support to BPD.

We appreciate that the Senate has passed our Judicial Transparency Act, which will—for the first time—require detailed information to be published regarding the sentences that are being given—or not given—for violent crimes. Both the House and the Senate have funded our Re-Fund The Police Initiative to help recruit and retain more quality officers, increase diversity and expand community policing efforts, improve training to teach better de-escalation techniques, and provide body cams and other technology and equipment upgrades for state and local police departments.

However, there is still one critical piece of this agenda missing: the Violent Firearms Offender Act to increase penalties for those who illegally use guns to commit violent crimes. This common sense legislation has the overwhelming support of a vast majority of Baltimore City residents, and residents across the state. Jason Johnson, former deputy commissioner for BPD, wrote in endorsing the measure, "If we want to stem the violence, getting violent, inveterate 'trigger-pullers' off the streets immediately should be our highest priority." This bill will make our streets safer and save countless lives, but it has yet to receive a vote in either chamber.

I appreciate the work you have put into Senate Bill 387/House Bill 425 to address issues surrounding untraceable firearms, and agree that it is a positive step as we seek to stem the tide of violent crime, which is why I am allowing it to take effect. But it does nothing to penalize those who actually pull the triggers on firearms, and deflects away from the need to take decisive action to hold violent criminals accountable.

It is my hope that in the last days of this session, the General Assembly will do the right thing and pass the Violent Firearms Offender Act, so that we can ensure those who use guns to commit violent and heinous crimes remain off of our streets and out of our communities. At the very least, I ask you to give the victims and their families a vote, so that legislators can explain to their constituents where they stand on this issue

With people continuing to be shot and killed nearly every single day, I know that you genuinely share in my outrage at this senseless violence. It is past time to put the politics aside and get this done.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.

Governor