



TO: Interested Parties

FROM: GIFFORDS

DATE: April 2023

RE: Recommendations for Saving Lives from Gun Violence in Massachusetts

Massachusetts has historically been a leader in gun safety, with some of the nation's strongest gun laws and safest communities. This past year, Massachusetts received an "A-" grade on GIFFORDS Law Center's [*Annual Gun Law Scorecard*](#), with the sixth strongest gun safety laws in the nation and the lowest rate of gun-related mortality according to CDC data.

However, with the onset of the pandemic in 2020, Massachusetts experienced a sharp increase in gun homicides: the most since 1994, according to CDC data. While Massachusetts has been a leader in many areas, the state has not succeeded in preventing surges in gun violence or kept up with changing dynamics that fuel gun violence. The Boston Police Department has reported an 80% increase in the recovery of ghost guns, but Massachusetts has not passed ghost gun legislation. Peer states have enacted laws to promote gun violence victims' access to justice in the courts and raised the minimum age to purchase firearms, and Massachusetts should do the same. And while Massachusetts took important steps to protect survivors of abuse and violence who obtain court protection orders by prohibiting the subject of those orders from possessing guns, it should do more to implement and enforce those protections.

With a gun safety champion in the governor's office and many more leaders in the legislature, Massachusetts has a chance to close these gaps and once again lead the nation. Massachusetts's record of action has prevented many violent tragedies and saved lives, but there is much more work to be done to improve safety for all Massachusetts residents.

10 Recommendations for a Safer Massachusetts:

1. Stop the proliferation of ghost guns (such as S 2031*):

Massachusetts should pass comprehensive ghost gun reform to ensure that people cannot circumvent the state's strong gun safety laws by easily building their own untraceable, undetectable firearms from unregulated firearm build kits.

2. Promote victims' access to justice (such as H 2380):

Massachusetts should pass legislation establishing a firearm industry code of conduct and ensuring victims harmed by industry members' misconduct can seek fair justice in the courts.

*Bill numbers as of 4/10/23 but are subject to change.

3. **Strengthen protections for survivors of abuse, stalking, and sexual violence:**

Massachusetts should establish clear, standard, and enforceable processes to ensure that courts order violent or abusive individuals to relinquish firearms after those individuals become subject to domestic violence or harassment prevention orders that protect people who have suffered patterns of abuse, stalking, intimidation, sexual assault, or other criminal acts. Courts and other personnel should be clearly directed to verify that these individuals promptly relinquished any firearms and firearm licenses, and to order prompt protective responses, including warrants to recover firearms and licenses, in cases where the respondent illegally failed to relinquish them.

4. **Modernize Massachusetts's assault weapons and large-capacity magazine law (such as H 2358 and H 2363):**

Massachusetts should close gaps in its decades-old assault weapons law to restrict more modern military-style weapons used to perpetrate many mass shootings. It should limit the sale of legacy assault weapons and large-capacity magazines, and restrict the firearm industry from manufacturing assault weapons for civilian markets. The state should also enact restrictions on other especially dangerous weapons, such as armor-piercing ammunition and .50 caliber rifles.

5. **Strengthen Massachusetts's public carry laws (such as H 2305/2359 and S 1500):**

Massachusetts should amend its laws governing carrying firearms in public locations to strengthen licensing and vetting standards and to expand protections against carrying firearms in especially sensitive locations, including polling locations and government buildings.

6. **Establish a Medicaid Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery Program (such as H 1199):**

Massachusetts should follow the lead of at least five other states that have established Medicaid coverage for violence prevention counseling and trauma support services provided by certified violence prevention professionals to Medicaid beneficiaries who have been victims of community violence or chronically exposed to violence, and who are at high risk of violent injury.

7. **Raise the minimum age to purchase firearms (such as H 2369):**

To protect young people, Massachusetts should require that civilians be at least 21 years old to purchase their own firearms, and at least 18 to own and possess firearms without adult supervision.

8. **Enact a comprehensive firearm relinquishment law:**

Massachusetts should enact a comprehensive firearm relinquishment law to ensure that people who become disqualified from keeping their firearms promptly and safely relinquish them, and to require courts, law enforcement, and other stakeholders to take swift action to recover illegally retained firearms.

9. Close gaps that fuel gun trafficking:

Massachusetts should enact clearer restrictions on straw purchasing and gun trafficking. It should strengthen efforts to investigate and curb illegal gun sales, and share data with the public regarding the leading sources of crime guns in Massachusetts.

10. Ensure the long-term sustainability of lifesaving violence intervention programs (such as S 1495):

Massachusetts should secure sustained revenue for highly effective violence prevention programs like the [Safe and Successful Youth Initiative](#) and other trauma recovery services for survivors of gun violence to promote long-term investments in violence intervention and protect these programs from budget cuts in the future. One strong option for generating this revenue would be through a modest fee or excise tax on profitable firearm and ammunition dealers.