

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 25, 2021

The Honorable Merrick Garland
Attorney General
United States Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland:

We write to express concern over the increased proliferation and use of so-called “auto sears” and other conversion devices and to urge the Department of Justice to take immediate action to work with local law enforcement to prevent the use and proliferation of these devices.

As the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives has found, auto sears are add-on components that can convert semi-automatic weapons into fully automatic weapons and are classified as machine guns under federal law.¹ Federal law enforcement officials have noted that the installation of these devices “requires little technical expertise... [and] can be done in about 60 seconds”² but the use of these devices can have deadly consequences, allowing a gunman to rapidly fire multiple rounds with a single pull of the trigger.

The proliferation of these illegal devices has increased nationwide, in part due to the ease and accessibility of 3-D printing and the availability of cheap imported conversion devices from countries like China, which can be purchased for as little as \$19 each.³ In Minnesota, the Minneapolis Police Department’s statistics indicate that the number of incidents involving automatic weapons discharge has spiked, and is currently at seventy-two incidents compared with five incidents this time last year.⁴ Gun related homicides are also on the rise. In New Jersey, 87 people were shot and killed between January and May 2021, an increase of 36 percent from the same period in 2020.⁵

This increase appears to relate to the growing prevalence of conversion devices as well as so-called “ghost guns” which can be assembled at home from parts purchased online or 3-D printed.⁶ To date, the Department of Justice has prosecuted numerous people for illegally possessing conversion devices and converting semi-automatic firearms into fully automatic weapons.

¹ See, 26 U.S.C. § 5845 and 27 C.F.R. §479.11

² Libor Jany, *Illegal gun modification devices proliferate, resulting in more deadly rounds in Minneapolis*, STAR TRIBUNE, Oct. 13, 2021, <https://www.startribune.com/illegal-gun-modification-devices-proliferate-resulting-in-more-deadly-rounds-in-minneapolis/600106352/>

³ U.S. ATTORNEY’S OFFICE – DISTRICT OF KANSAS, *Indictment: Indictment: So-called ‘Glock switches’ Would have Turned Pistols into Machine Guns*, May 30, 2019, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-ks/pr/indictment-so-called-glock-switches-would-have-turned-pistols-machine-guns>

⁴ Jany, *supra* note 2.

⁵ Brent Johnson and Matt Arco, *Murphy, governors from neighboring states vow to fight gun violence with new pact*, NJ.COM, Oct. 12, 2021, <https://www.nj.com/politics/2021/10/murphy-governors-from-neighboring-states-move-to-fight-gun-violence.html>

⁶ Jany, *supra* note 2.

We appreciate the Justice Department's ongoing efforts to protect the American people from these deadly devices, but more must be done to keep the American people safe. Accordingly, we respectfully request responses to the questions below:

1. Has the Department of Justice developed a strategy to address the proliferation of auto sears and other conversion devices?
 - a. Has the Department of Justice changed its prosecutorial policies with respect to auto sears and other conversion devices in light of the increased proliferation?
 - b. Has the Justice Department's law enforcement components adopted new policies or modified existing procedures to address the increased proliferation of auto sears and other conversion devices?
2. Does the Department of Justice have a plan to address the ease of accessibility with respect to auto sears and other conversion devices through methods such as 3-D printing?
3. How does the Department of Justice plan to address the inflow of conversion devices from overseas, including coordinating with the Department of Homeland Security and other federal law enforcement agencies?
4. Does the Department of Justice maintain statistics on the recovery and seizure of auto sears, switches, and other conversion devices by law enforcement?
 - a. Are there any shortcomings in existing data collection, and if so, how does the Department of Justice intend to address those gaps?
5. What steps has the Department of Justice taken to coordinate with state and local officials to reduce the proliferation of auto sears and other conversion devices?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator