

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 11, 2022

Marvin Richardson
Acting Director
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
99 New York Avenue NE
Washington DC 20226

Dear Acting Director Richardson:

Thank you for your work to keep our communities safe. We are writing to ask for your urgent attention to growing gun violence throughout the country, including the increased use of illegal machine gun conversion devices known as auto sears or switches.

In January 2022, a gunman shot three Houston police officers with a barrage of automatic gunfire using an auto sear that converted his semiautomatic pistol into an automatic weapon. These devices, which can allow weapons to fire at a rate of up to 1,200 bullets per minute, make shootings more deadly, make our law enforcement officers' jobs more dangerous, and increase the risk that innocent bystanders could be injured or killed when such a volume of bullets is unleashed.

While federal authorities have announced charges against 19 individuals in the Houston area who have used auto sears to commit violent crimes, including murder, use of these dangerous modifications is becoming more common around the country.¹ Just last week, a tragic shooting in Sacramento involving at least one gun that had been modified with an auto sear killed six people and wounded 12 others. Officials estimate at least 100 rounds were fired.² In Washington, D.C., the number of guns with auto sears the Metropolitan Police have recovered has been steadily increasing, doubling from spring 2020 to spring 2021.³ And according to Fred Malinowski, special agent in charge of the Houston Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) office, the amount of guns modified with auto sears seized by law enforcement across the United States has quintupled since 2020, from 300 guns in 2020 to more than 1500 in 2021.⁴ ATF must do more to protect communities across the United States.

¹ Michelle Homer and Melissa Correa, "This Has to Stop: 19 Houston-Area Suspects Charged in Federal Crackdown on Illegal Gun Switches." Khou.com (Feb. 24, 2022). <https://www.khou.com/article/news/crime/19-houston-suspects-arrested-federal-charges-gun-switches/285-445053b8-a6cc-4a45-ab1a-556868ec8ead#:~:text=The%20feds%20say%20the%20%22Glock,30%20rounds%20in%202.2%20seconds.&text=HOUSTON%20%E2%80%94%20Federal%20investigators%20are%20going,an%20illegal%20mini%20machine%20gun.>

² Libor Jany, Richard Winton, and Kevin Rector, "Sacramento massacre shows rising dangers of handguns converted into automatic weapons." Los Angeles Times (April 7, 2022). <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-04-07/la-me-sacramento-shooting-automatic-weapons.>

³ Peter Hermann, "D.C. police see rise in devices that convert guns into fully automatic weapons." The Washington Post (Sept. 4, 2021). [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/guns-auto-sears-automatic/2021/09/04/0be57914-0020-11ec-ba7e-2cf966e88e93_story.html.](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/guns-auto-sears-automatic/2021/09/04/0be57914-0020-11ec-ba7e-2cf966e88e93_story.html)

Often, auto sears come from overseas. But even more troubling, according to Stephen Galloway, the ATF's assistant special agent in charge for Los Angeles, law enforcement is recovering devices at crime scenes that are manufactured with a 3D printer at home or in machine shops.⁵ Just three weeks ago, the New York City Police Department announced the arrest of a Brooklyn man for 3D printing gun parts, including auto sears, and assembling and selling ghost guns.⁶

As you know, the National Firearms Act regulates machineguns as well as “any part designed and intended solely and exclusively, or combination of parts designed and intended, for use in converting a weapon into a machinegun.” (See 26 U.S.C. 5845(b).). ATF has previously issued rulings on auto sears that only regulated certain auto sears by the National Firearms Act; however, there are multiple avenues to acquire these parts and a growing willingness by the gun industry to market these products.⁷ Less than one month after the three Houston police officers were wounded by a Glock with an auto sear, a major gun distributor posted a video on Twitter celebrating a Glock equipped with an auto sear.⁸

We urge you to issue updated and explicit guidance on auto sears, put a stop to gun companies pushing the legal limits on these devices, and provide additional resources to help rid communities like ours of these dangerous devices.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to working with you to make our communities safer for everyone.

Sincerely,



Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress



Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

⁴ St. John Barned-Smith, “More Houston shootings are involving 'Glock switches,' which turn pistols into machine guns.” The Houston Chronicle (Feb. 25, 2022). <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/crime/article/More-Houston-shootings-involve-Glock-16945519.php>.

⁵ Natalie Brunell, “ATF Agents in LA Tracking Thousands of Illegal Machine Gun Switches.” Spectrum News 1 (April 14, 2020). <https://spectrumnews1.com/ca/la-west/public-safety/2020/04/14/atf-agents-in-la-tracking-thousands-of-illegal-machine-gun-switches>.

⁶ Dean Moses, “A new age of gun crime: NYPD bust Brooklynite who 3D printed firearms.” amNew York (March 9, 2022). <https://www.amny.com/news/a-new-age-of-gun-crime-nypd-bust-brooklynite-who-3d-printed-firearms/>.

⁷ Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, *ATF Ruling 81-4*. <https://www.atf.gov/file/11236/download>.

⁸ Brownells, Inc. (@BrownellsInc), “What did you do to celebrate your #freedom on #2ADay? Comment below!” Twitter, February 24, 2022, <https://twitter.com/brownellsinc/status/1497029581433307137?s=21>.



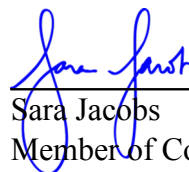
Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress



Grace Meng
Member of Congress



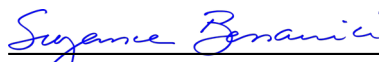
André Carson
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress




Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Joe Neguse
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress



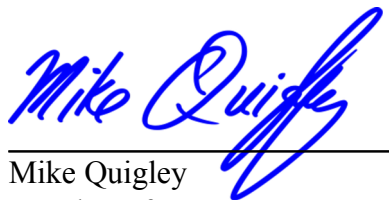
Kathy E. Manning
Member of Congress




Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress



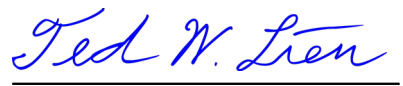
Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress



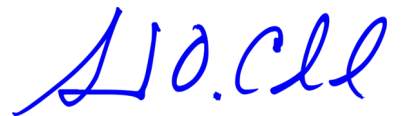
Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress



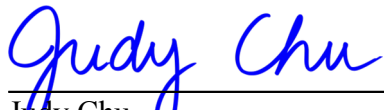
Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress



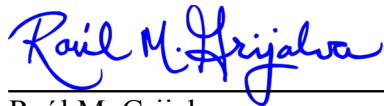
Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Susie Lee
Member of Congress



John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Jim Himes
Member of Congress



John Yarmuth
Member of Congress



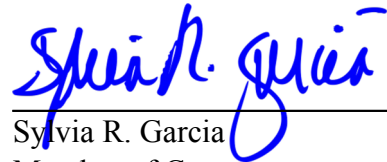
John B. Larson
Member of Congress



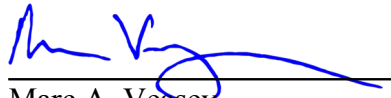
Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress



Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress



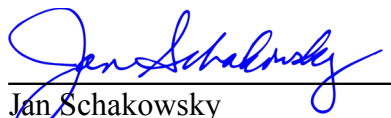
Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress



Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Colin Z. Allred
Member of Congress



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress