



State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 6185; SB 695

Dear Chairman Dargan and Chairwoman Hartley, and Members of the Public Safety & Security Committee

I am before here you today in support of House Bill 6185 and Senate Bill 695, Acts that seek to establish a Gun Offender Registry.

These acts seek to strengthen supervision of convicted gun offenders once they are released back into the community. Modeled on successful programs across the United States, a "gun offender registry," should require gun offenders convicted of specified gun crimes register their addresses, other personally identifiable information, and work or school location with the police; verify the information annually; and promptly notify the police if they change addresses for a specified time after the expiration of any time being served on probation, parole, supervised release, or conditional release. Ideally the information could be made available to other local, state or federal government agencies, including those agencies with a rehabilitative interest in the offender.

The purpose of the gun offender registry is to address the very high risk of recidivism posed by those who commit gun offenses, a threat that is particularly grave given that subsequent arrests are more likely to involve crimes of violence. Perhaps most notably, studies have shown that gun offenders are four times more likely to be arrested for homicide than other offenders.

THE PROBLEM OF GUN OFFENDER RECIDIVISM: Studies indicate people who carry illegal guns pose a very high risk of recidivism:

Recent Baltimore statistics show that 42% of defendants charged with felony gun crimes have prior gun arrests.

In New York City, when compared to other felons, those convicted of felony gun possession were:

More likely to be re-arrested;

Their re-arrests were more likely to involve violence (e.g., murder, sex offenses, robbery, assault, weapons) compared - 42% compared to 25%; and

They were four times more likely to be arrested for homicide.

These realities and statistics evidence themselves in New Haven as well, year after year, with the overwhelming preponderance of shooting perpetrators and victims being persons previously convicted of felony gun crimes.

LOCAL RESPONSES - GUN OFFENDER REGISTRY ACTS:

Requirements: Gun Offender Registry Acts (GORAs), the most well-known are those passed in Baltimore in 2007 and New York City in 2006, require defendants convicted of specified gun crimes to:

Register their addresses with the police;

Verify them in person every 6 months; and

Promptly notify the police if they change addresses for a period of time following their conviction or period of incarceration.

Covered gun crimes: Each ordinance lists the specific crimes that trigger reporting because they are tied to high recidivism rates in data about that city.

Duration: A person remains on the Gun Offender Registry for a period of years - three in Baltimore, four in New York City - from the date of conviction or release from imprisonment, whichever is later.

Penalties: In both those cities, failure to abide by these conditions is a misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in jail or a fine up to \$1000 or both.

Analogue: GORAs build upon Megan's Laws, which have proven to be effective enforcement tools against sex offenders around the country.

As noted above, studies conclusively demonstrate that gun offenders pose a high risk of recidivism, and their subsequent arrests are more likely to involve crimes of violence. Baltimore found that 42% of defendants charged with felony gun crimes have prior gun arrests. In New York City, when compared to other felons, those convicted of felony gun possession were substantially more likely to be re-arrested for crimes of violence and perhaps most significant is the finding that previous gun offenders are four times more likely to be arrested for homicide than other offenders.

Research shows that 50-90% of all violent crime victims and suspects are former offenders

Research also indicates that reentry services are most successful at reducing recidivism when they (target the highest risk offenders and (2) concentrate services on the first few days and weeks after release.

By knowing who and where gun offenders are, public agencies will be able to target, through intervention, programs aimed at creating a roadmap out of recommitting crimes.