



September 24, 2012

The Honorable Randy Richardville  
Senate Majority Leader  
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Lansing, MI 48909-7536  
FAX: (517) 373-0927

The Honorable Gretchen Whitmer  
Senate Minority Leader  
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The Honorable Richard Snyder  
Governor  
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Lansing, Michigan 48909  
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The Honorable Tonya Schuitmaker  
President Pro Tempore  
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**RE: Michigan Mayors Oppose HB 5225 and Elimination of Gun Purchase Permits**

Dear Governor Snyder, Majority Leader Richardville, Minority Leader Whitmer, and President Schuitmaker:

We write to express our strong opposition to HB 5225, a bill that would eliminate the state's handgun purchase permits and effectively end background checks for private handgun sales in Michigan. This bill would make it easier for convicted criminals and persons with severe mental illness to obtain deadly weapons, and make it more difficult for our police officers to protect themselves and our communities.

As members of the coalition Mayors Against Illegal Guns, we represent more than 1 million Michigan residents. We are deeply concerned about gun violence in our communities. According to the most recently available data, there are 440 gun murders in Michigan every year – more than one per day. Since 2010, seven Michigan law enforcement officials have been shot and killed. Given this terrible loss of life, we are dismayed that our state legislature is considering efforts to undermine our critical public safety laws.

Under current state law, a resident must pass a background check and basic firearms training exam to obtain a permit to purchase a handgun. The system places a minimal burden on law-abiding gun owners while helping to block gun sales to convicted felons, domestic abusers and others prohibited by law from possessing guns.

Michigan permits are most critical in the context of private party gun sales, which often take place at gun shows, over the internet. Private sellers are not required by federal law to run background checks at the point of purchase. In fact, the Michigan State Police estimate that a staggering 48% of all gun sales in Michigan are private party sales.

If the legislature passes HB 5225, it will eliminate background checks for private party gun sales. Nearly half the handguns sold in the state of Michigan would be purchased with no paperwork and no

questions asked. That amounts to tens of thousands of private handgun sales each year in which felons and other dangerous people can easily and anonymously purchase handguns from private sellers despite prohibiting criminal and mental health records.

In other states, unregulated private sales are strongly associated with an increase in gun trafficking. According to an analysis by Mayors Against Illegal Guns of data provided by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives, states that do not require purchase permits for all handgun sales “export” crime guns to other states at rates more than three times higher than states that do require purchase permits.

As mayors, we have great respect for the Second Amendment and the rights of law-abiding gun owners. And responsible gun owners understand the need for background checks to keep guns out the hands of criminals. According to a recent survey by the Republican pollster Frank Luntz, 74% of members of the National Rifle Association agree that all gun sales should be subject to a background check.

For these reasons, we join the Michigan State Police, the Michigan Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention and Treatment Board, and the Michigan Coalition to End Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence in strongly opposing HB 5225. This is a bill that would put guns in the wrong hands and leave our communities more vulnerable than ever to gun violence.

On behalf of the more than one million residents we represent in Michigan, we urge you to stop HB 5225 from becoming law.

Sincerely,

Mayor John Hieftje, Ann Arbor, Michigan  
Mayor John B. O’Reilly, Jr., Dearborn, Michigan  
Mayor Dave Bing, Detroit, Michigan  
Mayor Dayne Walling, Flint, Michigan

Mayor Karen Majewski, Hamtramck, Michigan  
Mayor Gretchen Driskell, Saline, Michigan  
Mayor Brenda L. Lawrence, Southfield, Michigan  
Mayor Paul T. Schreiber, Ypsilanti, Michigan

**CC:** Speaker of the House Jase Bolger