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# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Attorney General Brown Takes Action to Stop Illegal Gun Trafficking** *Coalition of 21 Attorneys General Backs ATF Rule to Limit Unlicensed Gun Sales*

**BALTIMORE, MD (December 7, 2023)** – Maryland Attorney General Anthony G. Brown joined a multistate coalition of 21 Attorneys General [supporting](#) a proposed Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) Rule that would reduce illegal gun trafficking by ensuring that more gun sales are subject to background checks.

Following the passage of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, the ATF has proposed a new regulation to clarify what it means for a person to be “engaged in the business” of dealing in firearms, and, therefore, required to obtain a federal license to sell firearms and to run background checks on potential gun purchasers. The proposed Rule would close loopholes that previously allowed the unlicensed sale of firearms, including online and at gun shows, by ensuring that more individuals who sell guns are subject to federal licensing and background check requirements. Vendors operating at gun shows and online would be subject to the regulation in more instances, reducing opportunities for gun sales without background checks.

The new regulations will also help local and state law enforcement officials track gun sales and provide them with more tools to effectively inspect gun dealers, trace guns used in crimes, prosecute gun charges, and help keep the communities they serve safe. The coalition submitted a letter of support for the proposed Rule and recommended areas of enforcement to limit gun trafficking.

“Innocent lives are lost every day at the hands of people who get access to guns they have no business owning,” **said Attorney General Brown**. “Licensing and thorough background checks save lives. We will no longer allow gun dealers to use loopholes to skirt basic safety measures that can help prevent illegal gun trafficking and violence plaguing our communities.”

Unlicensed gun sales make it easier for people who cannot legally purchase firearms to obtain them, endangering communities and fueling gun violence. Gun shows in states without universal background checks are a significant venue for unlicensed gun vendors and are a major source of guns trafficked into states like Maryland. A recent ATF report revealed that, between 2017 and

2021, the number of guns originating from gun shows that were later used in the commission of crimes increased by 19 percent. Additionally, roughly 75 percent of the guns trafficked across state lines and used in the commission of crimes originated from states without background check laws.

Noting that online gun sellers and those liquidating the inventories of licensed gun sellers are common sources of guns used in crimes, the coalition urges ATF to hold those who illegally sell firearms accountable instead of encouraging them to become licensed gun dealers.

In support of the ATF's proposed Rule, Attorney General Brown joins the Attorneys General of Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington.

<https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/press/2023/120723.pdf>