

EXHIBIT B

Testimony of Chief James Johnson

Good afternoon, Chairmen and members of both Committees. Thank you for allowing me to testify in front of you this afternoon and just listening to me for a while. I am a police chief from Baltimore County. My testimony today reflects the support of the Maryland Chiefs of Police Association and the National Law Enforcement Partnership to Prevent Gun Violence, which I currently chair.

I have offered testimony in front of Congress on gun violence issues specifically in support to changes to Federal law related to background checks for all weapons purchases. A limit of no more than ten rounds for high capacity magazines and reinstatement of the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban. I strongly support the Bill before you today with the Amendments submitted by the Maryland Police Chief Association and adopted by the Senate. The proposed Maryland Firearms Safety Act of 2013 has many critical, important provisions. My testimony will focus on the value of licensing, restricting magazines to no more than ten rounds and a ban on assault weapons.

My testimony also will address what I consider one of the most impressive legislation pieces to address the mental health issues that we face, I faced as a young officer and my people face each and every day in Maryland and frankly, all across the nation. Law enforcement leaders everywhere have been working to reduce gun violence, this gun violence epidemic that we face. This is a public health issue. No question about it.

Law enforcement on the front lines of this issue nobly carry out the decisions made by our elected officials, you, each and every day on the front lines. We've had great successes as the Governor stated in reducing homicides in this great State. Thanks to superior police work and frankly, advances in technology that I thought I would never see. But to be honest with you,

I believe the murder would be much higher than it is on paper if it weren't for first aid rendered by police officers, our fine EMTs and the best trauma surgeons this world has ever seen. It would be higher. I strongly feel that it made a huge difference in reducing the lives lost working with police.

The fact of the matter is nearly 30,000 Americans are killed across this nation each and every year. The fact is that many more die from suicides and accidental shootings. Nearly 100,000 of our citizens die each and every year. One recent study revealed in just six cities, just six cities across America in just one week, it cost us \$38,000,000. Cities the same size of Baltimore. Experts anticipate within the next two years for the first time in our Nation's history, firearms related deaths will exceed those that are killed in automobile crashes. We need to do something.

Here's another fact. In 2011 more police officers were killed by firearms violence than by any other means. This has not happened in nearly two decades. The proposal before you today will enhance Maryland's existing accomplishments by reducing gun violence. I am confident of that. This legislation will reduce the number of deaths associated with firearms. We must do all we can do to stop guns from getting into the wrong hands and keep excessive fire power out of our community.

Let's review the issues before Marylanders today beginning with assault weapons. I and many other knowledgeable detectives and officers feel that the gun violence that we face each and every day by assault weapons written into this particular Act is very clear and very concise. This is crucial because frankly the debate over what is an assault weapon oftentimes comes up in this conversation. It has been and continues to be a very critical issue. I am very impressed with the language in this Bill in that matter.

Assault weapons have no place in our communities and on our streets. They are used to commit crimes of violence all across America, in the State of Maryland and in my County. Right now we are looking for an individual, we have photographs of him, that chooses to use what appears to be an assault weapon to rob fast food locations. Right now as you are sitting here we are looking for this individual.

Originally designed and engineered for the battlefield, these weapons are tactically engineered to offer superior tactical and offensive capabilities. They are engineered and designed to allow the user to carry dozens upon dozens of rounds uninterrupted by mechanical failure. They allow its user to stay on target to minimize what I refer to as GEK, so the shooter can deliver accurate hit after hit. From the weapons' wake to its ability to support add on tactical features, the weapon we call and assault weapons are superior killing machines. These are SWAT tools. Special Weapons and Tactic tools used by police departments and military. As we have seen nationally, these weapons are used in greater frequency and mass killings. Madison, Wisconsin, Aurora, Webster, New York and of course New Town.

Now about the magazines. I and my peers in public safety believe it is reasonable for Maryland to adopt a ten round limit on magazines. The reloading process is absolutely critical for the victim's chance of survival. It takes time for a shooter to reload. It gives someone precious moments to seek cover or concealment. To escape or even take offensive action if they are in a position to do so.

In the shooting of Congresswoman Gifford in Tucson, this factor, the time it took the shooter to reload allowing the individual to attack that shooter and brought that incident to close. A citizen certainly needs this precious time. You are going to have folks that come before you and they are going to say you can reload that magazine in two seconds. Well maybe you could if

you are on a range in a calm environment, a controlled environment, but if you are in a rage or a drug induced, you are not thinking clearly, it is going to take longer than two seconds if you can reload it at all.

More rounds fired means more hits, more lives lost and more physical injury. No question about it.

This Bill also contains impressive language and a comprehensive set of requirements designed to restrict the mentally and emotionally ill from obtaining and possessing firearms. The Bill specifies that a hearing officer should be allowed to decide if a person should not possess a firearm unless credible evidence exists that he or she possesses a danger to himself or others. We believe this provision will reduce firearm related deaths and injury. Absolutely. Very confident of that. I handled thousands of these emergency evaluations as an officer. This is really important. We believe this provision will reduce deaths. What is important is we need to handle this as expediently as we currently handle domestic order.

Regarding firearm licensing, I strongly support the licensing. Research shows the licensing will reduce a number of non-intentional shootings by ensuring the gun owners know how to safely use and store that firearm. A licensing provision will increase the compliance with existing firearm laws by requiring a gun owner to demonstrate knowledge of how that gun works and the laws that are applicable to that gun in this state. It will decrease illegal gun sales and purchases by ensuring that all licensees are eligible to possess a firearm on Federal and State law. It will reduce the murder rate as the Governor stated and as states with licensing requirements have shown such a reduction. I urge you to keep in the fingerprint requirement in the Bill. This will help law enforcement. It will help us clear cases. Don't take this from me. This is really important to link that case together, catch the culprit before he commits a second,

third or fifth homicide. Please don't take this out of the Bill.

Maryland citizens are quite familiar with rendering fingerprints. I had to give on the other day because I cashed a check and the bank required it to put the fingerprint on the check itself. We are used to this and just verges the amount of employment requiring fingerprinting. And you know, I don't really think that passing a performance based written test that demonstrates whether an applicant can safely load, fire and store a weapon and has knowledge of firearms and laws, is that so unreasonable? The four hours I think is excellent.

Perhaps the most significant success of licensing will lead to diminished straw purchasing. This is a really serious issue. Straw purchasing. In law enforcement we know criminals are prohibited that their proof of buying attempted purchasers to get guns. Criminals want a clean gun. They don't want a gun that has been used. They will settle for it if they have to get it if that is all there is. But they want a clean gun that is not connected with a burglary or connected with another shooting because if they get caught with it, they have got a big problem. They want a clean gun, so you get a straw purchaser to get it for you. Let me tell you how they do it. Oftentimes they will reach out to a, perhaps an intellectually unsophisticated or coerced individual and have them march in and do it for them under Maryland's current practices and policies. It is unacceptable. We had an individual who was mentally handicapped that was used by this type of system where they had him go in and buy multiple weapons that were later recovered in the streets of Baltimore used in crimes of violence. I strongly support the instructions component of the Bill. Viewing a thirty minute video, we can do better. Maryland can do better than that and I think that is critical in this Bill. I don't think the straw purchaser is going to sit through a four hour training program where frankly our range and certified gun

instructors, they are going to weed people out that they know are there for straw purchasing. It is evident. You can tell.

Certainly the requirement to obtain proof that they have completed a firearms training program is exceptional. Language in the Bill detailing mental health disqualifiers is extraordinary and certainly we believe that the language for voluntary involuntary commitment also is very valuable. The language proposing the person under protection of a Court appointed guardian, very critical. We get calls from people who are appointed guardians and they are begging us to intervene because that family member is trying to get that weapon. Very important.

For the sake of time I am going to skip but we support the requirement that the new Maryland residents also have to register their firearms as well. We support language in the Bill that requires sixteen hours of training for the concealed carry. Very important. Our officers have to go through weeks of training to carry a weapon.

Law enforcement strongly believes that these changes will make Maryland safer and you know, no matter what the final outcome is from this very spirited debate, if you can lawfully purchase and possess a firearm, and I think we all would agree to this, let's secure those weapons. Let's secure, particularly if we have children in our homes that are suffering from mental and emotional health issues, let's secure those weapons.

Thank you for listening to me.