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**Legislature Sends Gun Safety Bill to Governor**

*Massachusetts Creates National Public Safety Model*

(BOSTON) – The House and Senate passed comprehensive gun violence legislation which for the first time provides local authorities, in conjunction with the court system, an avenue to deny a firearm identification (FID) card, authorizes licensed gun dealers to access criminal offender record information (CORI) and establishes a groundwork for improving school safety.

The bill enhances record-keeping efforts and takes decisive steps to curtail gun trafficking. To address any loopholes created by secondary sales, the legislation requires the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS) to create an online portal for private sales. This will ensure that secondary sales are subject to proper monitoring and information sharing without placing an additional burden on gun owners. The bill also requires local licensing authorities to trace any firearm used to commit a crime and report relevant data, brings Massachusetts into compliance with the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, and requires gun dealers to obtain a CORI check when hiring employees.

“We seek not to be the safest state in the nation, but strive to make our communities the safest in the world,” said **House** **Speaker Robert A. DeLeo (D-Winthrop)**. “Through a rigorous focus on violence prevention, mental health and increased oversight this legislation gives us the tools to reach that goal. I’m particularly proud of the consensus support this bill received and believe it is indicative of its future efficacy.”

“The steps outlined in this legislation will significantly reduce the impact and prevalence of gun violence in the Commonwealth,” **Senate President Therese Murray (D-Plymouth)** said. “By requiring stricter regulations, increased protections in schools enhancing penalties and strengthening gun-related crimes, we are helping to establish a safer, more secure environment for children and families across the state.”

“This legislation is an effective compromise, indicated by the wide range of support it has received from advocates on both sides of the issue,” said **House Majority Leader Ronald Mariano** **(D-Quincy).** “It protects the rights of legal gun owners, strengthens the licensing process, and takes important steps relative to the tracking of firearms, mental health services, and school safety.”

"From the very beginning of this process, when the Senate President called me in December of 2012, I have felt a duty to accomplish a Gun Safety Bill this session,” said **Senator James E. Timilty (D-Walpole), Chair, Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security**. “During over 42 hours of public hearings statewide, countless meetings with legislators, staff, and advocates on both sides of this issue, I believe we took the time to hear every possible angle and perspective. All of that input is reflected in what we passed today. It has been an honor to work with and hear from so many individuals across the Commonwealth and I believe this compromise between the Senate and House struck a balance between protecting our streets and schools, and the 2nd Amendment."

“This legislation creates more accountability for all the participants in the firearms licensing process,” said **Representative Garrett Bradley (D-Hingham),** **First Division Chair**. “I want to express my appreciation to my colleagues in the Legislature for addressing school safety, mental health services, criminal firearms trafficking and enhancing the record keeping and licensing processes while preserving the constitutional rights of legal gun owners.”

“Today’s passage strikes a careful balance between protecting the fundamental right to bear arms and taking a hard line against violent crimes involving firearms,” said **Senator Anthony Petruccelli (D-Boston), Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Financial Services**. “I am confident that today’s actions will result in safer communities.”

“I’m happy we were able to accomplish this legislation before the end of full formal session,” said **Representative George Peterson, Jr.** **(R-Grafton), Assistant Minority Leader**. “This is a great bill for law-abiding gun owners and I believe it will do a great deal to reduce gun violence in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.”

To improve violence prevention, the bill creates a more standardized licensing process. While law enforcement officials have a procedure for issuing a license to carry (LTC), needed to purchase or possess any legal firearm including hand guns, this bill establishes a standardized process for determining the suitability of individuals applying for a FID card, needed for a shotgun or rifle. If a licensing authority deems an individual unsuitable for a FID card they must file a written petition in court which will be reviewed in a hearing. The legislation also specifies that a person may only be denied a FID card or LTC based on unsuitability if they are deemed a risk to public safety based on reliable information.

The legislation includes numerous provisions to increase accountability and oversight including:

* Increases the fine for failure to report a lost or stolen firearm;
* Requires applicants renewing their LTC or FID cards to verify that they have not lost any firearms or had any firearms stolen;
* Increases the penalties for improper storage while improving related awareness and education measures;
* Establishes penalties for gun dealers who fail to report a lost or stolen weapon; and,
* Mandates that an individual whose LTC has been revoked, suspended or denied must surrender all firearms in their possession.

The legislation includes provisions that will improve school safety and assist schools with identifying best practices that will provide safe and supportive school environments. It directs the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to develop a safe and supportive schools framework that districts may individualize and implement and establishes a related commission to collaborate with DESE on improving and refining the framework.

The bill also:

* Requires schools to develop plans to address the general mental health needs of students and staff;
* Directs the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) to submit schools construction blueprints to the local police and fire departments, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), and regional law enforcement agencies identifying points of entry and emergency access routes;
* Requires at least 2 hours of suicide awareness and prevention training every 3 years for all licensed school personnel;
* Requires annual review of school Medical Emergency Response Plans by local police and fire officials, and requires schools to practice and evaluate such plans each school year; and
* Increases the penalty for carrying a firearm on school grounds and makes the offense a statutory right of arrest.

This legislation extends the Legislature’s commitment to addressing mental health problems and preventing domestic violence. It includes a number of provisions to ensure law enforcement officials have appropriate public documents relating to applicants’ health and criminal histories and requires courts to report information regarding domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health. More than 60 percent of all firearm deaths are categorized as suicides. The bill heightens suicide prevention efforts and training for educators, health care providers and firearm owners and dealers. It also directs the Department of Public Health (DPH) to collect, analyze and report on suicides.

The legislation improves administrative efficiencies for gun owners and increases rationality in the licensing process as follows:

* It does not disqualify individuals with a misdemeanor punishable by less than two years from acquiring a firearm;
* Eliminates the 90 day renewal process for FID cards and ensures legal protection for individuals who have applied for renewal;
* Lowers fines for expired cards;
* Allows individuals to petition for judicial review for any restrictions placed on licenses; and,
* Exempts firearms designed for Olympic shooting competitions from conditions of licensure restrictions.

The legislation also:

* Removes self-defense spray from the definition of ammunition;
* Eliminates Class B licenses;
* Increases the punishment for being armed with a firearm while carjacking; and,
* Establishes penalties for unlawfully transporting firearms into the Commonwealth for the commission of criminal activity or unlawful distribution.

The bill now goes to the Governor for his signature.