

READERS RESPOND

We can stop guns from killing our children

The death of children at Sandy Hook Elementary captivated our attention and caused us to consider how best to keep our kids safe. However, the sad and startling fact is that Maryland has had its own Sandy Hook tragedy every year from 2005-2011. What was even worse: No one noticed.

Between 2005 and 2011, 150 of our children under the age of 18 were murdered by guns. Of those 150 children, the vast majority died in Baltimore City and Prince George's County, more than two-thirds were African American, and 94 percent of them were killed by handguns.

We know how to make progress — let's build on what works and fix what doesn't. Over the years Maryland has instituted background checks for all handgun and assault rifle sales, banned many assault weapons and gun magazines that hold more than 20 bullets. Laws have limited handgun sales to no more than one per month. These measures have all saved lives. However, we need to do much more.

The O'Malley-Brown administration's SB281 will require that handgun purchasers be licensed by the state police with a fingerprint background check and safety training. In addition, SB281 proposes a ban on assault weapons and gun magazines that can hold more than 10 bullets at one time.

Sen. Brian Frosh's SB 266 will allow the state to better regulate gun dealers. It is critical that the state be able to properly regulate and close down, if necessary, gun dealers who flagrantly violate the law and are a source for illegal guns.

Sen. Jamie Raskin's SB 540 will require gun owners to report lost or stolen guns and will help in deterring straw purchasers from transferring guns to people who should not have them.

We know that gun control is a complicated issue. But enough is enough. Maybe this time we can find a common ground, enact these laws, and give our children a safer community.

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