



## THE CITY OF SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

MAYOR DOMENIC J. SARNO

*HOME OF THE BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME*

October 8, 2021

The Honorable Michael Day  
Chair, Joint Committee on the Judiciary  
State House, Room 136  
24 Beacon Street  
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable James B. Eldridge  
Chair, Joint Committee on the Judiciary  
State House, Room 511-C  
24 Beacon Street  
Boston, MA 02133

***Re: HB 1839 – An Act Relative to the Commonwealth’s Right to Appeal Bail Decisions***

Dear Chairman Day and Chairman Eldridge:

On behalf of the City of Springfield, Police Commissioner Cheryl Clapprod and all of our brave and dedicated men and women of our Springfield Police Department, I am writing in full support of legislation filed by Representative Angelo Puppolo. HB 1839: An Act Relative to the Commonwealth’s Right to Appeal Bail Decisions.

HB 1839 was filed in response to an alarming trend of repeat violent offenders being released by our Trial Courts and returning to the streets after having to meet and comply with little to no bail after arraignment. Time and again, our dedicated Springfield Police Department (SPD) and state and federal law enforcement partners find themselves arresting the same repeat violent offenders who were released on lenient conditions on additional gun charges. It is also sad to report that some of these individuals are involved with and brought up on murder charges. Incidents that could have been avoided if only our courts could have held these repeat violent offenders accountable and responsible for their actions.

The intent of this legislation is to give our Commonwealth and District Attorney’s equal footing when addressing violent repeat offenders as it relates to the ability of appealing bail set in District Court. Too often, we see repeat violent offenders involved and charged with guns, drugs and other violent crimes back on our streets and in our community on low or no bail. What message does that send to our residents and business community who work with our SPD to get these individuals off our streets and make our neighborhood safe, only to see them back in their neighborhoods within hours or days doing the same crime(s) they were originally arrested on. It is aggravating and frustrating for everyone.

These repeat violent offenders have little to no regard for the conditions in which they are released – GPS ankle bracelet, probation; none of these conditions of their release seems to deter these repeat violent offenders from causing trouble in our community and affecting the quality of life for our residents and business community.

While the proposed legislation seeks to give the Commonwealth the right to appeal bail in District Court, it does not take away any current rights of defendants. It is to be one more tool in keeping violent offenders off our streets and to keep our residents and businesses safe.

According to the recent FBI's Annual Uniform Crime Report (UCR), overall crime in the City of Springfield has decreased by 4% from 2019 to 2020. This marks the 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive year overall crime has decreased in the city. However, violent crime continues to plague our urban community and we continue to notice an increase and uptick in violent crimes involving guns. According to the same FBI UCR, violent crime is up approximately 5.6% across the nation.


To address this unfortunate trend locally, under the leadership of Police Commissioner Cheryl Clapprood our Springfield Police Department has reformed our Narcotics Unit and created a new Firearms Investigation Unit. This new Firearms Investigation Unit is tasked with helping to address the uptick in gun crimes/violence in the city. It is safe to say that these repeat violent offenders being released back into our community are a key component for this increase and uptick in gun related crimes as they commit the same violent crimes involving guns over and over again. This is why Commissioner Clapprood felt our SPD needed to reallocate our local police resources into a new Unit to address this growing quality of life concern.

Last year, our Springfield Police Department took a record of almost 300 illegal firearms off our streets. This year, SPD has so far seized over 200 illegal guns – 100 by our new dedicated Firearms Investigation Unit.

It is our strong belief that this legislation will help put the Commonwealth on equal footing with defendants as it relates to the ability of appealing bail set in District Court. It would give our District Attorney's such as our own Hampden District Attorney Anthony Gulluni, the needed tools to even the playing field by allowing the Commonwealth to, as defendants can, appeal to Superior Court and/or a single justice of the State Supreme Court.

Please, any assistance your committee can do to pass HB 1839 favorable, would be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your continued efforts and leadership on behalf of the Commonwealth and the City of Springfield.

Respectfully,

  
Domenic J. Sarno  
Mayor

*Good health & God Bless!*

Cc: State Representative Angelo J. Puppulo, Jr.