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# PRESS RELEASE

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## Attorney General Brown Sues Three Maryland Gun Stores for Facilitating Illegal Gun Trafficking into District

*Joined by DC Attorney General Schwalb and Everytown Law, Complaint Accuses Firearms Dealers of Illegally Selling Dozens of Weapons to Straw Purchaser*

**BALTIMORE, MD (September 3, 2024)** – Attorney General Anthony G. Brown, District of Columbia (DC) Attorney General Brian L. Schwalb, and Everytown Law today announced a lawsuit against three federally licensed gun dealers for illegally selling dozens of firearms to a straw purchaser who then trafficked the weapons, mainly into DC.

The lawsuit alleges that Engage Armament, LLC (Engage), United Gun Shop (United), and Atlantic Guns, Inc. (Atlantic), all of which are located in Montgomery County, Maryland, ignored clear warning signs that Demetrius Minor was engaging in illegal straw purchases—buying firearms with the intent of transferring them to individuals not legally entitled to possess them—by selling him 34 semiautomatic pistols over a 7-month period, in violation of state and federal laws.

While Minor was [prosecuted](#) in DC on federal gun trafficking charges in December 2022, the three firearms dealers—entities meant to be “[the first line of defense against straw purchasing](#)”—have not yet been held responsible for their illegal conduct and role in fueling gun violence across the region.

“Federally licensed gun dealers know the law and they know what to look for to spot possible illegal trafficking. As this lawsuit demonstrates, gun dealers cannot just choose to ignore these warning signs and guardrails,” **said Attorney General Anthony Brown.** “Let this be a warning to other dealers who put public safety at risk to make a profit: We are watching, and we will hold you accountable for illegal conduct that fuels gun violence across our region.”

“The level of gun violence in the District, and the devastating impact it has on victims, families, and our community as a whole, is unacceptable,” **said Washington, DC, Attorney General**

**Schwab.** “This is a regional problem that requires a regional solution, as far too often, guns purchased in Maryland and Virginia are trafficked across our borders and end up at crime scenes in DC. Today we are holding these firearms dealers—businesses that chose profits over safety—accountable for their clear negligence, blatant disregard for the law, and pain they have inflicted across the District and DMV. My office will continue to do everything in our power to combat the deadly flood of illegal weapons into the District.”

“As alleged in our complaint, Engage, United, and Atlantic have fueled local gun violence and put the safety of countless individuals on the line by diverting guns into the illegal secondary market through obvious straw purchases,” **said Eric Tirschwell, Executive Director of Everytown Law.** “This lawsuit puts any other bad-faith dealers who prioritize profits over the law and public safety on notice: traffickers and straw purchasers will be held accountable, but so too will the gun stores that ignore suspicious purchasing behaviors and facilitate the flow of illegal weapons into our cities and local communities.”

### **What is a “Straw Sale”?**

A straw sale occurs when a federal firearms licensee (FFL) sells a firearm to a buyer (the straw purchaser), who is in fact purchasing the gun for a third party, the true buyer, who is often prohibited from legally purchasing a gun on their own. These unlawful transactions allow the true buyer to obtain firearms without having to present identification or undergo a background check and allow the dealer to profit from a sale which it could not otherwise have legally made.

Dealers such as Engage, United, and Atlantic have a legal obligation to prevent illegal purchasing and are aware of common indicators of straw purchasing and gun trafficking, such as bulk purchases and repetitive buying within a short time. Engage, United, and Atlantic nonetheless allowed Minor to repeatedly purchase firearms, including many duplicate or near-duplicate easily concealable pistols, in between April 6 and October 5, 2021. Almost immediately, Minor transferred those firearms to others who were prohibited from purchasing firearms themselves.

### **Straw Sales Fuel Gun Violence in Maryland and Washington, DC**

The illegal straw sales by Engage, United, and Atlantic have contributed to gun violence in the region. At least nine of the guns sold to Minor have been recovered at crime scenes in DC and the surrounding Maryland suburbs, as well as from fugitives with active warrants for violent offenses. These include a gun recovered by DC’s Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) in November 2022 from the DC hotel room of a Prince George’s County man also in possession of an illegal large-capacity magazine, a gun recovered in May 2022 by the Hyattsville Police Department from the residence of a stabbing suspect, and another recovered by the Montgomery County Police Department in July 2022 from the Adelphi residence of a criminal defendant. Many of the remaining guns are still unaccounted for.

The lawsuit alleges that by ignoring obvious warning signs that Minor was engaging in straw purchasing and allowing him to purchase multiple, similar weapons within a short period, the defendants violated the law by facilitating illegal gun sales and willingly conspiring with, and aiding and abetting, Minor’s illegal conduct.

The District of Columbia and Maryland are seeking to force the three defendant gun stores to stop engaging in illegal straw sales, in addition to monetary damages for the harm inflicted by their illegal conduct.

The full complaint is available [here](#).

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