



PREVENTING VIOLENCE
AND DEVELOPING
YOUTH LEADERS

YOUTH ALIVE!
3300 Elm Street
Oakland, CA 94609
Tel: (510) 594-2588
Fax: (510) 594-0667
mail@youthalive.org
www.youthalive.org

June 29, 2021

Senator Steven Bradford
Chair, Senate Public Safety Committee
State Capitol, Room 2031
Sacramento, CA 95814
Submission via Legislative Portal

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Executive Director
Youth ALIVE!
Oakland, CA

RE: AB 669 (Lackey) Firearms: unsafe handguns - OPPOSE

Dear Chair Bradford,

Youth ALIVE! opposes AB 669, because it unnecessarily expands exemptions to the Unsafe Handguns Act (UHA). There is no reasonable need to allow probation officers to possess unsafe handguns without completion of the entire Police Officer Standards and Training (POST) Basic Course. The potential implications are harmful to the citizens of California and to law enforcement.

Youth ALIVE! is a nationally recognized community-based organization known for initiating an alliance to treat violence as a public health crisis and developing young leaders in the process. Tasked as Oakland’s anchor organization for violence prevention, intervention, and healing, Youth ALIVE! has maintained a successful track record of implementing evidence-based violence intervention and prevention services. Our decades of experience serving victims of violent crime and individuals on probation informs our opposition of AB 669.

In 1999, California filled gaps in federal product safety law by enacting the UHA, which requires that all newly developed handgun models meet basic reliability and safety standards in order to be certified for sale or manufacture, or placed on-roster by the California Department of Justice. Currently there are over 800 guns on-roster and available for sale in California.¹ The standards mandated for a firearm to be on-roster are similar to measures enacted to regulate thousands of other consumer products since the Consumer Product Safety Act of 1972.² These standards are feasible, affordable, and necessary. They were developed to save lives, and they have done just that by preventing accidental discharges and unintentional shootings.³

Law enforcement officers who have completed the entire POST Course have long been exempt from the restrictions in the Unsafe Handgun Act. AB 669 would carve

¹ <https://oag.ca.gov/firearms/certified-handguns/search>

² Consumer Product Safety Act, Pub. L. No. 92-573, 86 Stat. 1207 (1972).

³ CTR DISEASE CONTROL, 2001, U.S. UNINTENTIONAL FIREARM DEATHS & RATES PER 100,000 (2018).; CTR DISEASE CONTROL, 2001, CAL. UNINTENTIONAL FIREARM DEATHS & RATES PER 100,000 (2018).; CTR DISEASE CONTROL, 2018, U.S. UNINTENTIONAL FIREARM DEATHS & RATES PER 100,000 (2018).; CTR DISEASE CONTROL, 2018, CAL. UNINTENTIONAL FIREARM DEATHS & RATES PER 100,000 (2018).



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out an exemption from the UHA for county probation officers. AB 669's provision to require probation officers to complete only the firearms portion of the training course in order to be exempt from the UHA -- rather than the full POST training currently mandated under law -- will likely inject more unsafe handguns into the state, presenting a grave danger to the people of California. AB 669 is not simply a clean up as the author and supporters have described it; it undoes important protections which were just put into law last year. It is essential that law enforcement officers complete the entire POST training to fully understand how to handle dangerous firearms. Without that mandated extensive training and periodic re-training, those newly entitled to own unsafe handguns will be a greater risk to themselves and others.

AB 669 will likely also lead to more dangerous weapons in the hands of those who should not have them, through unregulated sales. California law enforcement officers have already been found guilty of trafficking off-roster handguns to civilians.⁴ Enforcement of the prohibition on these gun sales may be lax and law enforcement may be reluctant to arrest other current or retired state employees who sell these handguns to civilians who are prohibited from owning them.

Notably, county probation officers are not seeking this carve-out because they *need* to carry an off-roster gun for any substantive reason or are unable to complete full POST training. Instead, they simply *prefer* models of handguns that are not one of the more than 800 on-roster models available. The California State Legislature should not establish a precedent to allow county probation officers -- unlike all other law enforcement officials in the state -- to use unsafe handguns without extensive training and regular recertification that save lives and money. **For these reasons, we oppose AB 669.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Anne Marks".

Anne Marks
Executive Director

⁴Press Release, Dep't of Just. U.S. Att'y Off. E. Dist. of Cal., Jury Returns Guilty Verdicts for Former Sacramento County Sheriff's Deputy and Federal Firearms Licensee in Firearm Straw-Buyer Scheme, (June 11, 2015) available at <https://www.atf.gov/news/pr/jury-returns-guilty-verdicts-former-sacramento-county-sheriff%E2%80%99s-deputy-and-federal-firearms>; Steve Berry, *Pistol Had Many Owners Before Furrow*, LA TIMES, Aug. 4, 1999. available at <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1999-aug-14-mn-65-story.html>