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Rep. Kate Lipper-Garabedian and Sen. Michael Moore, Co-Chairs  
Special Legislative Commission on Emerging Firearm Technology  
Massachusetts State House  
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Boston, MA 02133

Everytown has long been passionate about the promise of microstamping technology, and has worked with other states to codify a microstamping mandate. As thought leaders and advocates in the gun safety movement, Everytown has consulted with policymakers for many years about the potential for this breakthrough technology to increase dramatically the number of gun crimes law enforcement can solve and the number of shooters they can interdict. Everytown encouraged and worked with lawmakers on microstamping laws in New York, New Jersey and California and has published research papers on microstamping, including a recent piece about the history and development of the technology, state legislative requirements, and the gun industry's failure to adopt microstamping to date.<sup>1</sup> Massachusetts is well-positioned to be the next state to lead the country by passing a law in 2026 requiring all handguns to have microstamping technology installed before they are sold in the Commonwealth.

### ***The importance of microstamping***

The use of microstamping would far exceed the capabilities and efficacy of the ballistic tracing technology currently used by law enforcement. Everytown writes with considerable expertise in the area of crime gun tracing, having toured multiple Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) facilities and multiple state police tracing centers over several years.

Everytown is very familiar with both the high value and the significant limitations of the ATF's National Integrated Ballistics Information Network (NIBIN), which helps law enforcement trace recovered ballistic evidence on a daily basis. NIBIN has been heavily used since its inception in 1997—its databases contain 6.5 million pieces of ballistic evidence<sup>2</sup>—and yet it can only help law enforcement identify spent cartridge casings at a crime scene if the gun in question was used in an earlier incident and casings from the earlier incident were submitted to the NIBIN database at the time. This is quite a lot of contingency, and indeed NIBIN hits are relatively rare: there have been 151,000 hits in the program's 26-year history, or one hit for every 43 pieces of

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<sup>1</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety, "Why Does the Gun Industry Oppose Microstamping?" October 10, 2024, available at <https://smokinggun.org/report/why-does-the-gun-industry-oppose-microstamping/>.

<sup>2</sup> Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, National Integrated Ballistics Information Network Factsheet. 2024, available at <https://www.atf.gov/resource-center/docs/undefined/nibinfactsheetfy24508cpdf/download>.



evidence in the database. What’s more, a NIBIN hit doesn’t guarantee that the crime scene evidence will be linked to a particular gun, but rather a successful hit will often simply link the evidence to the earlier incident—which may remain an unsolved crime. By contrast, a single microstamped casing recovered at a crime scene can quickly lead to a positive identification of the gun that fired it, because microstamped codes are unique and will be paired directly with firearm serial numbers. Unlike with traditional ballistics technology, every time authorities recover a microstamped casing, they have the potential to solve a crime immediately—regardless whether the gun was involved in prior incidents. This is a powerful advantage over the status quo.

Microstamping represents a major evolution in forensics that will dramatically improve law enforcement’s capacity to solve gun crimes.

### ***Microstamping is already viable technology***

Everytown is highly confident that microstamping technology is not only feasible, but already exists and is indeed ready for use immediately across the full range of pistol caliber types. Existing technology can microstamp a unique code onto a firing pin, and once installed in a firearm, the firing pin will transfer the code onto a cartridge casing when the gun is fired. Everytown has followed the development of this technology closely and has seen demonstrations of microstamping machines and microstamped firing pins in person at the New Hampshire headquarters of TACLABS, the original microstamping pioneers.

Currently, to our knowledge only TACLABS has developed and possesses the operating equipment that is immediately ready for microstamping implementation. The Commission is fortunate to have Todd Lizotte, the leader of TACLABS, as a member; his expertise in this area is unmatched. Though he can explain the process in great detail, in simple terms, it involves removing a firing pin from a firearm and using a machine—such as the IFM1050 Microstamping System—to imprint a unique microstamp sequence.<sup>3</sup> TACLABS has relayed to Everytown that its machine can handle firing pins for all pistol models currently on the market; the machine operator would only have to swap out minor parts to make it compatible with all 80 types of firing pins and can do so within moments. They have also stated that this machine takes approximately one minute to imprint one pin. TACLABS describes their equipment as “a turnkey machine tool solution to firearm manufacturers to incorporate microstamping technology within their firearms.”<sup>4</sup> It is a great advantage and head start for the legislative and implementation process in Massachusetts to have the foremost expert in this technology already involved.

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<sup>3</sup> TACLABS, Microstamping Manufacturing, available at <https://tac-labs.com/forensics/home/what-is-microstamping/microstamping-manufacturing/>.

<sup>4</sup> TACLBS, Products, available at, <https://tac-labs.com/forensics/microstamping-services/>.



And indeed, available evidence suggests that this technology performs with flying colors. According to a formal analysis by TACLABS, their technology is able to make a positive identification of a firearm’s code with over 96% accuracy from a single piece of evidence, a figure that not only builds upon current methods but in fact is remarkably valuable and far exceeds any threshold for establishing mere viability.<sup>5</sup> In their analysis, they performed a series of tests in which they fired four rounds using a test firing pin—and then determined a combined accuracy score that integrated identification results from two, three, and four of those spent casings. After integrating at least two of the casings, the accuracy improved to 99%.

The potential defeatability of this technology is minimal. The vast majority of pistol purchasers and users would not be able to identify a firing pin, let alone remove or replace a firing pin—meaning the Commonwealth should expect that the vast majority of pistols sold after any mandate comes into effect will remain microstamping-enabled. To be sure, a person with gunsmithing skills would know how to remove a firing pin from a pistol. But this type of gunsmithing takes a significant amount of technical expertise, much more so than any skill needed to, for example, deface a serial number on an existing firearm. And yet while defacing a serial number can generally be accomplished by a non-expert, it is in fact quite rare that crime guns are altered in this fashion.<sup>6</sup> Efforts to defeat the microstamping mandate will likely be few and far between, though any statute addressing a microstamping requirement should take this potential risk into account by prohibiting and punishing such alteration as a crime.

### ***Massachusetts should mandate microstamping***

Following California and New York, Massachusetts should codify a requirement that all pistols sold in the Commonwealth be equipped with microstamping technology. The ideal legislation would help bring this revolutionary technology to Massachusetts rapidly through a series of successive steps. The first step for a Massachusetts statute would be to establish statewide standards for the creation, examination, and certification of microstamping-enabled components, followed by the establishment of a licensing system for gunsmiths, firearm dealers, and other businesses who wish to engage in the business of creating or servicing microstamp-enabled firearms.<sup>7</sup> Gunmakers can opt to install this technology in the manufacturing process; if they do

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<sup>5</sup> Orest P. Ohar and Todd E. Lizotte, “Extracting Ballistic Forensic Intelligence: Microstamped Firearms Deliver Data for Illegal Firearm Traffic Mapping,,” available at <https://csgv.nonprofitsoapbox.com/storage/documents/LIZOTTE%20RESEARCH%20PAPER%20AUGUST%202009.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Crime Guns Recovered and Traced Within the United States and Its Territories, available at <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/nfcta-volume-ii-part-iii-crime-guns-recovered-and-traced-us/download>.

<sup>7</sup> New Jersey, California, and New York required initial certification of the viability of the technology as part of their laws. Because they have now established that the technology is indeed viable, Massachusetts can move directly establishing standards as the first step.



not, after-market vendors can perform the installation prior to sale. Like New York and California, Massachusetts should be prepared to require the State Police to be equipped to service these components directly if a stopgap is necessary. With this prerequisite infrastructure in place, the law would require that all semi-automatic pistols sold in Massachusetts be microstamp-enabled.

A possible timeline would be that two years from the date of enactment, a suitable state agency (such as the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS)) would establish the performance standards and testing protocols to be used to certify microstamp-enabled pistols and components; second, the state would, no later than three years following the law's enactment, take steps to help ensure the technology is commercially available, even in the event major manufacturers continue their refusal to integrate it into their manufacturing process.

The first step would be the establishment of a verification process by which manufactures of firearms or firearm components could submit their products for verification of their microstamping capability. The second step would be the creation of a licensure system for businesses and individuals who wish to engage in the business of creating and servicing microstamping components. The third step would be ensuring that the State Police are capable of servicing semi-automatic pistols to be microstamp-enabled.

Finally, only after the completion of the steps above, the bill would create a new mandate to go into effect for licensed firearms dealers, prohibiting them from selling, offering for sale, or otherwise transferring any semi-automatic pistol unless that pistol has been verified as microstamp-enabled.

### ***Implementation of microstamping: How it works in practice***

There are two potential avenues for any handgun to be microstamp-enabled at the point of sale, with technology installed either at the time of manufacture or post-manufacture:

- (1) A firearms manufacturer will integrate the microstamping firing pins into their manufacturing process so that pistols shipped to and sold in Massachusetts at retail will already be equipped with the technology; the manufacturer can thus provide any verification (which again should be included in any potential statute) that the pistols it has manufactured are microstamping-enabled and ready for sale; or
- (2) A state and federally licensed firearms dealer will purchase inventory from a manufacturer that is not yet equipped with microstamping technology; the dealer will manually remove the firing pins from those pistols and ship them to a state-certified



vendor or a state lab. That vendor or state lab will imprint each firing pin with a unique microstamp and ship the firing pins back to the dealer. The dealer will then reinsert the firing pins back into the pistols, officially log the unique firing pin code and link it with the firearm's serial number for all record-keeping purposes, and provide the verification (a vital part of a state statute) that those firearms are microstamping-enabled pistols ready for sale.

If done at the manufacturing level, Massachusetts should have an official roster of the models verified as being microstamp enabled; this could be added to the existing firearms rosters maintained by the Firearm Control Advisory Board. Massachusetts should require EOPSS to promulgate rules and regulations as to both forms of the verification process.

Everytown appreciates the opportunity to offer this information relevant to microstamping. The technology is indeed viable as of this writing and has been viable for many years; gunmakers have simply refused to adopt it voluntarily, repeatedly failing to update their designs in a manner that would prioritize public safety. Massachusetts should join the list of states that are now forcing the issue, ensuring that all new semiautomatic pistols purchased in the state will be microstamp-enabled, whether or not gunmakers equip the firearms at the time of manufacture.

Sincerely,

Jonas Oransky  
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Everytown for Gun Safety