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The Boston Globe

2 city councilors want stores to be licensed to sell knives

By Matt Rocheleau
Globe Correspondent / August 24, 2011

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Two city councilors will propose an ordinance today that would require businesses in Boston to be licensed before they can sell knives, which officials said minors can easily buy at retailers across the city.

“Why is it that people can buy a knife at their corner store, where their neighbors are buying milk and other household goods?” City Councilor Michael P. Ross said he was recently asked by Genie Curry of Roxbury. “And, why are they selling knives to children?”

Curry, 58, a member of the grass-roots group Mothers for Justice and Equality, asked Ross about the measure at a dinner several weeks ago. Her son Kramo Lavon Curry, 23, was stabbed to death in 2000.

“A lot of people aren’t aware of how available [knives] are,” she said. “I probably wouldn’t be aware either if my son hadn’t been stabbed. It needs to end.”

Under city rules, knives with a blade 2 inches or longer cannot be sold to anyone under 18. But a Boston police sting operation this past week found stores violating that rule, Ross said.

A 17-year-old who worked with police, visited 12 stores and found that three of them stocked knives, Ross said. Each of those stores illegally sold the teenager a knife with a blade longer than 2 inches and average prices around \$10, he said. Each store was fined \$300, Ross and police said.

Ross and Councilor Tito Jackson will present their proposal to the council today. The council will decide whether to hold a hearing to explore the idea further.

“Clearly, these knives are dangerous weapons being sold casually in a convenience store, and they’re being sold to children,” said Ross. He said he has spoken with parents who have found that children as young as 13 have purchased knives in Boston.

“Guns are heavily regulated; knives - there’s virtually no regulation,” he said.

There have been about 1,300 stabbings in the past 2 1/2 years, according to Boston police data.

Yesterday, a 23-year-old man was fatally stabbed in Dorchester, and a 24-year-old was arrested in the incident, police said.

“In Boston, we have more stabbings than shootings,” said Jackson. “But, oftentimes stabbings don’t get the same attention.”

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Monalisa Smith, founding member of Mothers for Justice and Equality, called knives “the weapon of choice.” While she said many buy and carry them for protection, the blades become a temptation for some “in the heat of the moment.”

And the availability of knives adds to the problem, Smith said.

“They’re easy to get and they’re not expensive,” said Curry.

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