



Testimony in favor of House Bill No. 7217 and House Bill No. 7373  
The R.I. House Committee on the Judiciary  
March 13, 2024

Dear Chairman Craven and Honorable Committee Members:

The Rhode Island Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the Diocese of Providence, which encompasses nearly 600,000 Catholics statewide, their parishes, schools, and numerous charities, which combine to form our state's second-largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Gun violence is complicated and cannot be addressed with just one change in policy. Whether it is a well-publicized mass shooting or the many gun-related deaths that occur every day that do not make the news, these tragedies all differ in their circumstances.

One thing is clear: there must be reasonable efforts to reform gun legislation. We join with the U.S. bishops who have supported "reasonable regulation of firearms" and have said that "guns are too easily accessible." (Testimony Submitted for the Record On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops before the United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary "Proposals to Reduce Gun Violence: Protecting Our Communities While Respecting the Second Amendment" February 12, 2013).

Gun reform is not the sole part of the necessary dialogue. The U.S. bishops, in asking Congress to take "concrete action to bring about a broader social renewal," listed other factors to consider, such as "mental health, the state of families, the valuation of life, the influence of entertainment and gaming industries, [and] bullying," in addition to addressing the availability of firearms.

Although much more work will be necessary to address the root causes of gun violence, we encourage the Rhode Island General Assembly to make meaningful reform by advancing House Bill No. 7217, which requires safe storage of firearms, provides civil and criminal penalties for violations, adds rifles and shotguns to the types of firearms requiring a trigger lock to be included with purchase and requires firearms dealers post signs regarding safe storage and House Bill No. 7373 which bans the possession, sale, and transfer of assault weapons.

The Most Reverend Richard Henning G. Henning, the Bishop of Providence, recently urged the General Assembly to pass "these bills for the sake of the common good and the defense of human life."

We encourage the members of the General Assembly to take action to address gun violence, which is an attack on human life, by advancing these bills. Thank you for considering this testimony.

The Reverend Bernard A. Healey  
Director of the R.I. Catholic Conference