

March 13, 2024

**RE: SUPPORT of H7217 by Representative Knight and H7373 by Representative Caldwell**

Thank you Chair Craven and Members of the House Judiciary Committee for hearing our testimony. I am Sydney Montstream-Quas, from Barrington, and a constituent of Representative Boylan. I am a founding Board Member of Rhode Island Coalition Against Gun Violence, where we address gun violence as an urgent public health issue.

**I am here in support of the Assault Weapons Ban, H7217, sponsored by Rep. Knight and the Safe Storage Bill, H7373, sponsored by Rep. Caldwell.**

The importance of Assault Weapons Regulation:

- **The majority of Rhode Islanders, 70.5%, support regulating assault weapons** (The Center for Research & Public Policy, Inc., 2020).
- The number of mass shootings in the US is escalating daily. **Today is the 73rd day of the year, and there have been 75 mass shootings**, according to the Gun Violence Archive.
- **Remember the February 2022 incident where a gunman fired 100s of rounds of ammunition at Providence police, using 15 weapons including assault weapons?** The shootout lasted about a half hour. Nearby residents were evacuated. **Former Commissioner Pare said the firefight involved more bullets and carried greater risk for police officers and residents than any gunfight they'd encountered.**

THE POLICE AND RESIDENTS LITERALLY DODGED THE BULLETS that day.

We know that assault weapons threaten our public health. **Yet when the police, who serve to protect us, are outgunned, that endangers our public safety too.**

The importance of this Safe Storage Bill:

- From 2014-18, 208 Rhode Islanders died as a result of firearms—70% were suicide. That's 145 people... children, parents, aunts and uncles, cousins, neighbors.
- This is even more of a crisis for our children: **"More than 80% of child deaths by gun suicide involve a gun belonging to a family member."** Those guns are most often an unlocked firearm from their own home. (Source: "Who are the owners of firearms used in adolescent suicides?" PMID: 21198329)
- **Almost 75% of school shooters acquired their firearms from the home of a parent or close relative** (Source: Protecting America's Schools: A US Secret Service Analysis of Targeted School Violence). This safe storage bill could help prevent the possibility of a horrific school shooting in Rhode Island.

**Gun violence is personal to me.** I grew up in a family of gun owners. I was taught to respect guns and handle them safely, loved target shooting with my family, and was recruited into ROTC after winning a shooting competition in college.

**My cousin Johnny, the father of 2 young girls, was murdered, a victim of gun violence. Johnny's murder shattered my family and his community. These bills may prevent families like mine from experiencing the life-long loss and pain of losing a loved one to gun violence.**

I applaud all of the sponsors and co-sponsors of these bills who are champions of gun violence prevention – and ask that you **vote these bills out of committee and to the House floor for a vote.**

Thank you.

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