

Chairperson Craven and Members of House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill 5436, the Rhode Island Assault Weapons Act of 2025. This bill aims to ban many commonly used semi-automatic rifles, handguns, and shotguns that are currently lawfully owned and in use by residents of Rhode Island. This legislation is overly broad and presents several serious concerns:

1. **Inconsistent with Rhode Island General Law:** The bill proposes registration and a fee for firearms, which contradicts existing Rhode Island General Law, specifically § 11-47-41, which restricts firearm registration. This inconsistency raises serious questions about its legality and potential for enforcement issues.  
<https://webserver.rilegislature.gov/Statutes/TITLE11/11-47/11-47-41.htm>
2. **Contradiction of the Heller Decision:** The bill seeks to prohibit many semi-automatic firearms, which are commonly owned by citizens. This runs counter to the Supreme Court's ruling in *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008), which affirmed that individuals have a constitutional right to possess firearms that are "in common use" for lawful purposes. <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/554/570/>
3. **Arbitrary Restrictions on Firearms:** The bill imposes bans based on firearm weight, which would unnecessarily restrict popular and widely used handguns and revolvers. This approach undermines the bill's stated goal of reducing gun violence, while creating confusion and unnecessary limitations on lawful gun owners.
4. **Overreach on Accessories and Parts:** The bill targets not only specific firearms but also accessories such as barrel shrouds, magazine placement, and buffer tubes. Furthermore, it bans the possession of parts that could be assembled into an "assault weapon." This broad and vague language could lead to legal uncertainties and unintended consequences for law-abiding gun owners.
5. **Misleading Definitions:** The definitions of "assault weapons" in the bill are overly broad, arbitrary, and inconsistent with the understanding of most people. The bill's title itself is misleading and appears to be designed to sway representatives into supporting it without fully understanding its potential impact.

Given the concerns outlined above, I strongly urge you to reject this bill and ensure that it does not progress out of committee. It is a far-reaching measure that would significantly infringe upon the rights of responsible gun owners in Rhode Island and fail to meaningfully address the issue of gun violence in a balanced way.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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