



To: Rhode Island House Judiciary Committee

Re: House Bill 5436– The State Assault Weapons Ban Act

Position: Oppose

Date: March 26, 2025

Honorable Members of the Rhode Island House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Christian Ragosta, and I am the Assistant Manager, Northeastern States, and on behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF), I urge you to oppose House Bill 5436 (H. 5436) – The State Assault Weapons Ban Act – which poses to not only severely impact Rhode Island's recreational shooting community, but also reduce much-needed conservation funding that state fish and wildlife agencies across the country, including Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RI DEM) rely on to effectively conserve our wildlife resources and their habitats.

Founded in 1989, CSF is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitols advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy. It is from this voice – with more than three and a half decades of organizational history, and a staff with approximately two centuries of combined policy experience on sportsmen's issues – that I voice our opposition to H. 5436.

H. 5436 intends to prohibit the manufacture, sell, offer to sell, transfer, purchase, possess, or to have under his or her control which by this bill's definition, targets certain firearms and associated features that are quite common within the hunting and recreational shooting communities, and often come standard from the factory. Not only would this ban unduly punish those who intend to purchase the addressed firearms or accessories, but individuals who are currently in possession of said rifles, shotguns, and handguns would be subjected to comply with unjust and arbitrary registration requirements.

Modern sporting rifles, semiautomatic firearms, and their respective accessories are commonly purchased and possessed by hunters and recreational shooters across the United States, including in Rhode Island, who value them for their durability and reliability. Modern sporting rifles are now

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the most popular type of firearms in America and are used for a wide variety of lawful purposes, including hunting, varmint control, shooting sports, and personal defense.

In addition to restricting access to these firearms for hunting and recreational shooting, a ban on these commonly purchased modern sporting rifles, semi-automatic firearms, and their respective accessories would also negatively impact conservation funding. Rhode Island's law-abiding hunters and recreational shooters have long played a vital role in funding conservation and wildlife management efforts. Under the American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF), a unique "user pays – public benefits" structure, Rhode Island's sportsmen and women and the hunting and shooting industries generate tens of millions of dollars each year for the RI DEM.

These funds are generated through license sales and a self-imposed manufacturer-level 10-11% federal excise tax on firearm and ammunition purchases through the Pittman-Robertson Act. These funds are collected by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and then distributed to the states to fund state fish and wildlife agencies and their important work as our nation's primary managers of our collective fish and wildlife resources. Last year, USFWS dispersed \$1.5 billion in total funding to the state agencies, of which \$1.1 billion was directly tied to taxes paid by the firearm and ammunition industry. Here in Rhode Island, \$5,396,808 was generated through Pittman-Robertson, providing vital funding revenue to the state's conservation, habitat restoration, and wildlife management efforts of both game and non-game species. An additional \$500,844 was generated to RI DEM through the sale of hunting licenses.¹

Unfortunately, H. 5436, if passed, would create a chilling effect on the state's hunting and recreational shooting activities, and would thus threaten the very funding that supports the state's delicate habitats and wildlife populations—something to which all Ocean Staters should care about. In recognition of the far-reaching negative impact H. 5436 would have on Rhode Island's recreational shooting community and on wildlife conservation throughout the state, I urge the House Judiciary Committee to vote "NO" and oppose H. 5436.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to comment on this legislation. If you have questions or would like any additional information, please feel free to contact me using the information below.

Respectfully,



Christian Ragosta

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¹ "Division of Fish and Wildlife Annual Report 2024" Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management 2024. <https://dem.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur861/files/2025-01/Annual%20Wildlife%20Report%202024%20-%20final%20copy.pdf>