

Daniel Rickerman
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March 23, 2025

RE: Support of House Bill H5436

Dear Chairman Craven and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Dan Rickerman, and I live in Barrington, RI. My State Representative is Jennifer Boylan. I am a member/volunteer of RI Coalition Against Gun Violence.

I'm here tonight in support of Representative Knight's assault weapons regulation bill, H5436. This bill will reduce the number of deadly, military-style firearms in our communities, and it will help keep Rhode Islanders safe.

Prior to moving to Rhode Island, my family and I resided in Sandy Hook, Connecticut. My youngest daughter attended kindergarten and first grade at Sandy Hook Elementary. Had I not made a career change and accepted a new job outside of Connecticut, my youngest daughter Caroline would have been at Sandy Hook Elementary the day of the shooting when 20 children and 6 adults lost their lives to an active shooter with an assault weapon. My family was safe that day, but we were still affected. Friends and loved ones that we knew from church, school, Boy Scouts and work all went through this unspeakable tragedy. We mourned for their losses and for the loss of innocence in this charming New England town.

We also mourned for one of Caroline's teachers. Vicki Soto taught my daughter in 1st grade. She encouraged Caroline during a period when she struggled in school and restored her love of learning. My wife celebrated Vicki in our home with the entire 1st grade class. Vicki lost her life at Sandy Hook Elementary protecting her young students from an active shooter with an assault weapon. She was reportedly shot 4 times with an assault weapon as she stood between an active shooter and the children in her classroom.

After the Lewiston, Maine shooting that left 18 dead, Representative Jared Golden stated: "I have opposed efforts to ban deadly weapons of war. The time has now come for me to take responsibility for this failure, which is why I now call on the United States Congress to ban assault rifles ... To the people of Lewiston, my constituents throughout the 2nd District, to the families who lost loved ones, and to those who have been harmed, I ask for forgiveness and support as I seek to put an end to these terrible shootings."

My family missed being directly involved in a school shooting, but we were still affected and lost a beloved teacher. Representative Golden regretted his prior votes against an assault weapon ban and apologized to his constituents. You will hear many arguments and statistics today regarding the effects of assault weapons:

1. When an assault weapon and/or a large-capacity magazine is used in a public mass shooting, nearly 14 times as many people are injured, and twice as many people are killed. Brady
2. From 2015 to 2022, mass shootings with four or more people killed where an assault weapon was used resulted in nearly six times as many people shot, more than twice as many people killed, and 23 times as many people wounded on average compared to those that did not involve the use of one. Everytown for Gun Safety
3. A recent Children's Defense Fund's Parent and Child Trends Survey by YouGov found fear of a school shooting the second most common worry for children between 6 and 17 years old and their parents. One-third of children surveyed said they are worried about a shooting happening at their school.

I respectfully ask you to have the courage to support this bill NOW before a tragic event happens at a Rhode Island school that kills or injures a constituent you are entrusted with protecting.

Respectfully,

Dan Rickerman
Barrington, Rhode Island