

Audrey Kupchan
9 Strawberry Drive
Barrington, RI

March 25, 2025

RE: Support of House Bill H5436

Dear Chairman Craven and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Audrey Kupchan and I live in Barrington, and my Representative is Jason Knight. I am a member/volunteer of the 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 keep us safer.

I recently wrote an article that was published in the Globe and I am including it here as my testimony:

COMMENTARY | ANITA KNOPOV AND AUDREY KUPCHAN

Gun violence is not just a law enforcement issue — it's a public health crisis

Rhode Island lawmakers have an opportunity to pass an assault weapons ban this legislative session, local physicians write

By Anita Knopov and Audrey Kupchan Updated March 19, 2025, 6:00 a.m.



STOCK NO. 25-10-0
SERIAL NO. MG-89
BRAND NAME SA
MODEL XDP-9
ACTION TYPE SC
CALIBER/GAUGE 9mm
BARREL LENGTH 4.5
CHOK

STOCK NO. 25-10-0
SERIAL NO. MG-89
BRAND NAME SA
MODEL XDP-9
ACTION TYPE SC
CALIBER/GAUGE 9mm
BARREL LENGTH 4.5
CHOK

WHEEL

Assault style weapons and hand guns are displayed for sale at Capitol City Arms Supply on in Springfield, Ill. SETH PERLMAN/ASSOCIATED PRESS

As physicians, we are trained to prevent injuries as well as manage injuries once they happen. Yet, every day, we witness the devastating toll of firearm violence. Some of these injuries are caused by assault weapons. These firearms, designed for military combat, have no place in our communities. Rhode Island has an opportunity to take a critical step toward public safety by passing an [assault weapons ban](#). We urge lawmakers to act now.

Firearm violence is a leading cause of death in the United States. According to [Everytown for Gun Safety](#), mass shootings involving assault weapons and high-capacity magazines result in twice as many people killed compared to those without these weapons. A study of mass shootings found that incidents involving assault weapons resulted in [70 percent more fatalities and 135 percent more injuries](#) than those involving other firearms, according to Giffords, a gun violence prevention organization.

As an emergency physician, I see firsthand the devastating impact of gun violence — many injuries are simply not survivable. For those who do survive, the consequences are lifelong.

Physicians see the long-term consequences of firearm violence on families, whether through direct injuries or the psychological toll of living in a society where school shootings are a constant threat. They must work with the survivors, treating long-term disabilities as well as mental health consequences of experiencing trauma.

Gun violence is not just a law enforcement issue — it's a public health crisis. We do not tolerate other preventable causes of mass death and injury. Why should firearms be any different?

Assault weapons are intrinsically designed for rapid fire and combat use. They allow a single shooter to inflict mass casualties in seconds, overwhelming even the best emergency medical response.

In Rhode Island, we only have one Level 1 trauma center. This means that hospital resources would be spread so thin that everyone else in our community would not get quality care if we were ever to suffer a mass casualty caused by an assault weapon.

Without an assault weapons ban, we remain vulnerable to mass shootings that could devastate our communities. Rhode Island has lagged behind other states in passing an assault weapons ban.

Advertisement

This legislative session offers a rare opportunity to change that. With new momentum, lawmakers must act now to protect our patients and communities. As physicians, we are trained to save lives. Rhode Island lawmakers must do the same by passing this bill.

Dr. Anita Knopov is an emergency medicine physician in Rhode Island. Dr. Audrey Kupchan is a primary care internist in Rhode Island.

Thank you for your time and for your consideration of this important legislation. Rhode Islanders deserve to live free from gun violence, and getting these weapons of war off our streets is an important and long overdue step. It is time to vote this bill out of committee and send it to the House Floor with a recommendation of passage.

Sincerely,
Audrey Kupchan, MD, FACP