

March 23, 2025

RE: Support of House Bill H5436

Dear Chairman Craven and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

We are writing today to express our support for Representative Knight's assault weapons regulation bill, H5436. For the record, we live in Pawtucket, RI, and our Representative is Jennifer Stewart.

We believe passing this bill will reduce the number of deadly military-style firearms circulating in our communities and improve public safety, while balancing the interests of citizens of Rhode Island to continue to responsibly own guns. We support this bill because:

- **The bill is not “anti-gun” as some have inaccurately portrayed and is focused on a subset of firearms that are truly designed as weapons of war.** The guns relevant to the bill are semi-automatic and have features that are designed to kill or wound large numbers of people quickly and efficiently. This includes weapons with such features as detachable magazines, large capacity fixed magazines (i.e., greater than 6 shotgun shells or 10 rounds for rifles and pistols), and/or have other military style features (folding, telescoping, or thumbhole stocks, pistol grips, threaded barrels for silencers or flash suppressors, shrouds, etc). It also lists bayonet mounts, and grenade launchers (really?) as features qualifying as an assault weapon.¹ It is simply irrational to think that the average citizen needs any of these types of weapons for self-defense, hunting, target shooting, or for any other recreational purpose. It is simply not appropriate that these weapons continue to be readily available in Rhode Island in an unregulated and uncontrolled manner. As we all know, many of the weapons in question have already been utilized for mass killings and have caused permanent physical and emotional harm to thousands of citizens across the country.
- **The bill represents a pragmatic, rational, and reasonable approach to gun safety regulation.** The bill allows for current assault weapon owners to continue to retain guns they already own that are subject to the proposed law. It also provides greater safety to the public by requiring that these existing assault weapons be registered with local or state police, and through the restriction of future sales. There are measures included in the bill in case an owner does not want to register the assault weapon with the police. The owner has the right to sell the weapon to a licensed firearms dealer, they can destroy it or turn the firearm over to the police (i.e., through a buyback program). The choice is up to them. This seems reasonable, because it acknowledges the interests and financial investment of gun owners, while also addressing the threat of gun violence and the rights of the majority of Rhode Islanders for increased safety.
- **Rhode Island needs to be a good neighbor to our adjoining states and be a leader in dealing with gun violence.** The neighboring states of Connecticut and Massachusetts have both implemented assault weapons regulations. We are currently the weak link in southern New England, allowing unregulated and unfettered access to assault weapons in RI. The potential exists for these weapons purchased in RI to then be used to wreak havoc outside our state

¹ It is acknowledged that the features defining an assault weapon as listed here is not complete. However, they do describe some of the more common and important key features included in the bill.

borders. This should be unacceptable to all our Representatives, Senators, and citizens. Rhode Island should be striving to be a leader in instituting reasonable gun safety measures, not a procrastinator.

In closing, an assault weapons bill has been under consideration for more than a decade in Rhode Island. That is far too long, particularly given the broad support for gun control measures among the majority of Rhode Island's citizens. It is unconscionable that this legislation be delayed any longer. Every year of delay results in more and more assault style weapons on the streets of Rhode Island. **The people of the State of Rhode Island expect and deserve a vote, either up or down.** This way we know where our representatives stand on the issue for certain. The time to vote is now!

Please vote this bill out of committee and send it to the House Floor with a recommendation of passage.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey & Sherri Simmons

Cc: Rep. Jennifer Stewart