



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT

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**Testimony Re: House Bill 5436, An Act Relating to Criminal Offenses --
Rhode Island Assault Weapons Ban Act Of 2025**

House Judiciary Committee

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. We would like to thank Governor McKee, Lieutenant Governor Matos, Secretary of State Amore, General Treasurer Diossa, and Attorney General Neronha for their strong support of this legislation. We would also like to thank Representative Knight for sponsoring this important bill and Representatives Caldwell, Boylan, Speakman, McEntee, Ajello, Kazarian, Craven, Dawson, and Felix for co-sponsoring. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its strong support for House Bill 5436, which would establish the Rhode Island Assault Weapons Ban Act of 2025.

Firearm related injuries remain the leading cause of death in the U.S. among children and youth ages one to 19, surpassing motor vehicle deaths and childhood cancers. **Nationally, youth gun deaths rose nearly 50% from 2019 to 2023.** American children and youth are 21 to 23 times more likely to be killed by a gun than their peers in other high-income countries. **Children who were born the year the historic Columbine massacre are now 26 years old. No youth in our country today know a world without the threat of sudden, deadly gun violence.**

Nationally and in Rhode Island, gun reform remains a key area of focus, especially in the wake of the devastating mass shootings in schools, grocery stores, parks, places of worship, and the other places we visit regularly. We would like to thank the General Assembly for passing several common-sense measures to protect Rhode Islanders from senseless gun violence in 2022 and 2024, and the continued work of the General Assembly to keep our children and families safe from preventable death and injury. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT believes these comprehensive state policies to reduce gun violence can be expanded to help **increase the safety of children in Rhode Island, and House Bill 5436 is a practical step to address the public health crisis of gun violence.**



**Gun-Related Emergency Department (ED) Visits, Hospitalizations,
and Deaths Among Children and Youth, Rhode Island, 2019-2023**

AGE	# OF ED VISITS	# OF HOSPITALIZATIONS	# OF DEATHS
1 to 14	33	<5	0
15 to 17	41	<5	5
18 to 19	57	16	6
TOTAL	131	23	11

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, 2019-2023.

In Rhode Island between 2019 and 2023, there were 131 emergency department visits and 23 hospitalizations of children and youth for gun-related injuries. Between 2019 and 2023 in Rhode Island, 16% (11) of the 69 injury deaths of children and youth under age 20 were the result of firearms.

As we have seen in recent mass shootings, assault weapons allow a shooter to fire large quantities of bullets in a very short amount of time. Due to the rapid firing, assault weapons allow a shooter to injure and kill large numbers of people very quickly and often do not allow time for police to respond. **During the decade the federal assault weapons ban was in effect (1994-2004), mass shooting fatalities were 70% less likely to occur.** Assault weapons are semiautomatic versions of weapons which were initially created for warfare purposes, and they are the weapons used in the deadliest mass shootings in our country.

Our children deserve to have a childhood free from gun violence in their schools and communities, and it is within your legislative power to ensure assault weapons are not available in Rhode Island. California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Washington, as well as the District of Columbia, have legislated bans on the purchase, possession, sale, manufacture, and/or transfer of assault weapons. An assault weapons ban is an American Academy of Pediatrics supported measure to aid in the protection of children from firearm-related injury and violence, and Rhode Island has the opportunity to codify this protection.

We strongly urge you to join our neighboring states and pass House Bill 5436 to ban the manufacture, possession, sale, purchase, and transfer of assault weapons. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.