

Anabella Mayorga

From: Jeffrey Goldwasser <rabbi.j.goldwasser@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2025 1:29 PM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Cc: admin@ricagv.org; Sarah Mack; Rev. Santiago Rodriguez; Stephanie Hague; Jeremy Langill
Subject: Testimony in Support of H5436 "Assault Weapons Regulation"
Attachments: Assault Weapons Ban Testimony.pdf

Please see the attached testimony on behalf of the RI Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty.

Thank you.

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March 21, 2025

Dear Chairman Craven and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I offer this testimony on behalf of the Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty in support of H5436 to regulate assault weapons.

Gun violence does not affect all communities equally. It disproportionately degrades the safety, security and wellbeing of people living in poor communities. Gun violence limits the life choices of poor people, it degrades the healthcare they receive, it makes it harder for poor children to receive a good education, and for poor parents to provide for their families. Gun violence is part of the system that perpetuates poverty in Rhode Island.

Representative Knight's assault weapons regulation bill, H5436, is supported by the Interfaith Coalition because it address a serious issue of poverty. The bill would keep the most dangerous weapons out of poor neighborhoods – weapons that serve no real purpose other than to cause mayhem. It would help make schools safer so teachers can spend more time on instruction and less time worrying about guns. It is long past the time when Rhode Islanders should have this protection.

The bill is not about competing ideologies or about securing or denying Second Amendment rights. Regulating assault weapons is well within the boundaries set by the U.S. Supreme Court for the regulation of firearms. Rather, this bill addresses firearms that destroy the lives of adults and children. It is about the pervasive threat of gun violence that tears at the very fabric of our communities and of society. It is about allowing repair and healing where now there is fear, brokenness and destruction.

Our religious traditions have very specific teachings about preventing violence. The book of Leviticus teaches, "Do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor" (Leviticus 19:16). The commandment is viewed in Jewish tradition as a prohibition against doing nothing while others are dying and while we have the power to save them. You can do something about assault weapons by passing Representative Knight's bill.

Respectfully submitted,
Rabbi Jeffrey Goldwasser