

## Anabella Mayorga

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**From:** Chris Morin <cmorin543@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 24, 2025 9:46 AM  
**To:** House Judiciary Committee  
**Subject:** Opposition to House Bill 5651

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
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House Committee on Judiciary  
Rhode Island General Assembly  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Subject: Opposition to House Bill 5651 – Juvenile Records Access for Firearm Background Checks

Dear Members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

As a lifelong Rhode Islander, a veteran, and current member of the Rhode Island Army National Guard, I am respectfully urging you to vote NO on House Bill 5651, which would permit access to juvenile records for the purpose of conducting firearm background checks.

My opposition to HB 5651 is based on both constitutional principles and deeply personal concerns regarding privacy and individual rights. I firmly believe in the necessity of thorough background checks and responsible firearm ownership, but allowing juvenile records to be accessed in adulthood undermines fundamental principles of justice, privacy, and rehabilitation. Juvenile courts were explicitly created to emphasize rehabilitation rather than lifelong punishment, providing young individuals with an opportunity to learn from their mistakes without enduring lifelong repercussions.

The foundation of juvenile justice in our society rests upon the understanding that youthful mistakes should not follow individuals throughout their adult lives, especially when they have responsibly fulfilled their obligations to society. HB 5651 disregards these principles by granting unnecessary access to records that should remain sealed after a juvenile reaches adulthood, completes their sentence, or is found not guilty. Allowing past juvenile records to affect adult firearm ownership is punitive and ignores the entire rehabilitative premise of juvenile justice.

This legislation also creates an unsettling precedent by weakening privacy protections and infringing upon constitutional rights. Expanding access to juvenile records poses legitimate risks of stigmatization and unfairly disadvantages responsible citizens who may have made minor mistakes in their youth but have since demonstrated exemplary behavior as adults. Such legislation unjustly and disproportionately affects individuals who have diligently worked to build responsible, law-abiding lives, punishing them twice for youthful indiscretions long after society and our courts have considered those matters resolved.

Additionally, there is no strong evidence to support the notion that opening juvenile records would improve public safety or prevent firearm-related crime. On the contrary, according to the U.S. Department of Justice and multiple academic studies, gun crimes are predominantly committed by individuals who obtain firearms illegally, often through theft or underground markets, rather than by responsible, law-abiding adults who follow proper channels and background check procedures. Thus, this bill imposes an unnecessary infringement on privacy without delivering genuine safety benefits.

Furthermore, from my personal experience as a veteran and through my extensive volunteer work with the veteran community, I deeply understand the significance of trust, privacy, and confidentiality. The possibility that a juvenile record, previously sealed and confidential, could be disclosed years later creates mistrust in our systems of justice and rehabilitation, potentially deterring vulnerable individuals from seeking necessary support or counseling due to fear of lifelong stigmatization.

Rhode Island should instead pursue measures proven effective at promoting responsible firearm ownership and enhancing public safety—such as providing better educational programs, mental health support, community-based violence intervention initiatives, and strengthening existing background check processes without compromising juvenile justice protections. Respecting the privacy of individuals who have successfully transitioned from youthful mistakes to responsible adulthood is vital to preserving fairness, dignity, and justice in our society.

I respectfully ask you to honor our state's long-held values of fairness, rehabilitation, privacy, and personal responsibility by voting NO on HB 5651. Please protect the privacy and future of Rhode Islanders who have worked diligently to overcome their past mistakes and live as responsible, productive adults.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this deeply important issue.

Respectfully and sincerely yours,

Christopher Morin

Coventry, Rhode Island