

## Anabella Mayorga

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**From:** Chris Morin <cmorin543@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 24, 2025 9:49 AM  
**To:** House Judiciary Committee  
**Subject:** Opposition to House Bill 5652

**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 5652 – Expansion of Firearm Possession Restrictions

Dear Members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

I am writing to you today to respectfully ask that you vote NO on House Bill 5652, which would restrict firearm possession rights based upon misdemeanor convictions subject to hate crime sentencing enhancements. While preventing violence and promoting public safety are goals we all share, I have serious concerns that this bill's approach is both overly broad and poses significant risks to constitutional rights.

HB 5652 proposes restricting the constitutional rights of individuals based solely upon misdemeanor offenses—even when an individual has responsibly completed their sentence and fulfilled their obligations to society. Misdemeanor convictions, particularly those resolved with a plea of "nolo contendere," can vary widely in nature and severity, and the decision to categorize them broadly under firearm prohibition sets a dangerous precedent of constitutional infringement.

This bill specifically ties firearm restrictions to the hate crime sentencing enhancement act, thereby intertwining firearm possession rights with an enhancement that may be highly subjective. Such sentencing enhancements can be based largely on perception or interpretation, introducing substantial potential for inconsistency and even abuse in application. Thus, HB 5652 risks creating situations where individuals lose a fundamental constitutional right based on circumstances that may not accurately reflect their true intent or level of risk to society.

Importantly, our judicial system already provides adequate mechanisms to address violence or credible threats of violence. Convictions involving crimes of violence or direct threats appropriately result in firearm prohibitions under existing laws, and rightly so. Expanding prohibitions to include misdemeanor offenses—even where no actual violence or direct threat occurred—dilutes the clarity and fairness of current laws, potentially punishing responsible citizens disproportionately.

Moreover, evidence suggests that individuals who commit crimes involving firearms typically obtain them illegally. According to numerous reports by the U.S. Department of Justice and the FBI, the vast majority of firearms used in crimes are acquired through unlawful means. Expanding firearm prohibitions based on misdemeanor offenses will primarily affect law-abiding citizens, not criminals who already disregard existing laws. Thus, this bill would infringe upon constitutional rights without providing tangible improvements in public safety.

As someone who deeply values individual rights and constitutional freedoms, I firmly believe that responsible, law-abiding citizens should never be unjustly deprived of their fundamental liberties, especially the right to self-defense

guaranteed by the Second Amendment and Article I, Section 22 of the Rhode Island Constitution. We must carefully balance public safety measures with respect for due process and constitutional protections to ensure fairness and justice for all Rhode Islanders.

Instead of broad and potentially unjust firearm restrictions, Rhode Island can better protect public safety through targeted, evidence-based strategies focused on prosecuting violent crimes aggressively, enforcing existing laws rigorously, and investing in proven community safety initiatives. Such approaches genuinely protect our communities without sacrificing the constitutional rights of law-abiding citizens.

In closing, I urge you to protect the rights of Rhode Islanders by voting NO on HB 5652. Please support effective, fair, and constitutionally sound measures that uphold both public safety and fundamental freedoms.

Thank you sincerely for your thoughtful consideration of this matter.

Respectfully and sincerely yours,

Christopher Morin

Coventry, Rhode Island