



## RHODE ISLAND POLICE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

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H 5654: SUPPORT

The Honorable Robert Craven, Sr.  
Chairman, House Judiciary Committee  
Rhode Island General Assembly  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903  
[HouseJudiciary@rilegislature.gov](mailto:HouseJudiciary@rilegislature.gov)

Dear Chairman Craven and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing today as the Chief of Police for the Town of South Kingstown and as a member of the Executive Board of the Rhode Island Police Chiefs Association to express strong support for H. 5654. This legislation would enhance public safety by eliminating the reciprocity provision in § 11-47-11, which currently allows non-residents with out-of-state permits to apply for concealed carry permits through Rhode Island municipal police departments.

Under current law, a non-resident who holds a concealed carry permit from another state may apply to any Rhode Island police department, regardless of whether they have any connection to the municipality. This practice undermines the ability of local law enforcement to conduct thorough and informed vetting.

The tragic Westerly nursing home shooting in December 2019 highlighted the dangers of approving applications without adequate local oversight. In that case, a firearm was legally purchased following a background check performed by one jurisdiction, despite concerns raised by local officials. This revealed a critical gap in the background check process—commonly referred to as the “hometown chief check.” In response, legislation was passed in 2020 requiring that firearm purchase applications be submitted to an applicant’s hometown police department.

When the reciprocity provision was enacted in 1959, most states conducted in-person, rigorous background checks. Today, many rely on online permitting systems with less oversight, making it difficult for Rhode Island police chiefs to assess the suitability of out-of-state applicants by our standards. The challenge is compounded by the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling in *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen*, which restricts the discretion of police chiefs to deny permits.

As a result, police departments are increasingly obligated to issue concealed carry permits to individuals with whom they have no familiarity or ability to adequately vet, creating a risk to public safety. Additionally, many departments are experiencing a surge in out-of-state applications, straining limited resources and diverting attention from in-state responsibilities. Applicants often lack any connection to the municipality and, in some cases, place undue demands on department staff.

For example, our department recently received two applications from individuals with no known ties to South Kingstown. Both listed New York City addresses and submitted Utah permits.

When we attempted to verify their backgrounds with New York City authorities, we were informed the requested information could not be released.

H. 5654 corrects this by limiting local permit eligibility to residents or those with a verifiable business presence in the municipality, ensuring that departments have the ability and context to make sound decisions. For non-residents, Rhode Island already provides a path through § 11-47-18, which allows the Attorney General to issue permits based on demonstrated need and suitability. Unlike the “shall issue” language in § 11-47-11, this provision offers a rigorous, discretionary review process.

By removing the reciprocity clause, H. 5654 strengthens public trust in the permitting process and ensures all concealed carry permits are issued based on thorough local knowledge and appropriate background checks. I urge your support of this important legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Matthew C. Moynihan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Matthew C. Moynihan  
Chief of Police, South Kingstown Police Department  
Executive Board Member, Rhode Island Police Chiefs Association