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From: Chris Morin <cmorin543@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 24, 2025 10:07 AM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: Opposition to House Bill 5891

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House Committee on Judiciary
Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Subject: – Firearm Restrictions Based on Felony Convictions

Dear Members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

I respectfully ask you to oppose House Bill 5891, which seeks to disqualify individuals with prior felony convictions from purchasing or possessing firearms. While ensuring public safety is critical and a shared goal, I am deeply concerned that this legislation is overly broad and infringes upon fundamental constitutional rights, especially concerning individuals who have demonstrated full rehabilitation and have become responsible members of society.

Current Rhode Island laws already adequately prohibit firearm possession by individuals convicted of crimes of violence or who present a credible danger to society. However, HB 5891 would expand firearm prohibitions significantly to include all felony convictions, regardless of their nature, circumstances, or how much time has passed. This broad categorization ignores the diversity of felony offenses, many of which are non-violent, and unjustly punishes individuals who may have long since paid their debts to society and demonstrated meaningful rehabilitation.

Rhode Island's criminal justice system is founded on principles of fairness and rehabilitation. By automatically and permanently disqualifying all individuals with prior felony convictions—without considering their current behavior, rehabilitation efforts, or contributions to society—this bill undermines the very ideals our judicial system aims to uphold.

Many individuals with past felony convictions have gone on to lead responsible, productive, law-abiding lives, actively contributing to their communities. They deserve the opportunity to fully reintegrate into society, including having their constitutional rights restored when appropriate. By permanently depriving them of their Second Amendment rights, even decades after their convictions, this bill effectively continues to punish individuals indefinitely, regardless of their rehabilitation or current circumstances.

Moreover, this overly restrictive legislation fails to meaningfully enhance public safety. According to research by federal agencies, such as the Department of Justice and the FBI, most firearm-related crimes are committed by individuals who acquire firearms illegally—not through lawful, regulated channels. Therefore, HB 5891 primarily impacts rehabilitated, responsible individuals seeking lawful firearm ownership, not criminals intent on violating the law.

Instead of broad, indefinite prohibitions, Rhode Island should support targeted, evidence-based strategies to ensure community safety, including stringent enforcement of existing laws against violent offenders, enhanced community support programs, and improved rehabilitation services.

In conclusion, while protecting public safety must remain a priority, permanently stripping constitutional rights from individuals based solely on past felony convictions, irrespective of rehabilitation or context, violates fundamental fairness and justice. I respectfully urge you to uphold fairness, due process, and constitutional principles by voting NO on HB 5891.

Thank you very much for your thoughtful consideration of this deeply important issue.

Respectfully and sincerely yours,

Christopher Morin

Coventry, Rhode Island