

## Ariana Costa

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**From:** Paul Larkin <plarkin@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 25, 2025 7:14 AM  
**To:** House Judiciary Committee  
**Subject:** Support for HB 5936

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Completed

To the Honorable Members of the Rhode Island Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 5936 – Weapons – Review and Appeal Process for Handgun Permits. This bill provides a much-needed framework for individuals to seek review and appeal decisions related to their applications for permits or licenses to carry a handgun, whether processed by local licensing authorities or the Attorney General. By establishing a clear and consistent process, HB 5936 enhances fairness, transparency, and due process for law-abiding Rhode Islanders exercising their constitutional rights. I urge you to vote in favor of this legislation.

Rhode Island’s current handgun permitting system, governed by R.I.G.L. § 11-47-11 (local authorities) and § 11-47-18 (Attorney General), serves an important role in balancing public safety with individual liberties. However, the absence of a standardized review and appeal process leaves applicants with limited recourse if their applications are denied—often without detailed explanation or a clear path to challenge the decision. Local authorities operate on a “shall-issue” basis, while the Attorney General’s discretionary “proper showing of need” standard can lead to subjective denials. In either case, applicants deserve a mechanism to ensure that decisions are fair, consistent, and based on accurate information. HB 5936 addresses this gap by formalizing a review and appeal process, bringing much-needed clarity and accountability to the system.

A defined appeal process is a cornerstone of due process, ensuring that individuals are not arbitrarily stripped of their rights. For example, an applicant might be denied due to a clerical error, an outdated record, or a misinterpretation of their background—issues that could be corrected if given a fair opportunity to respond. Without HB 5936, such denials can leave law-abiding citizens without remedy, forcing them to navigate costly and uncertain legal challenges or simply abandon their rights altogether. This bill levels the playing field, giving applicants a practical way to seek redress and ensuring that licensing decisions are grounded in facts, not assumptions.

Moreover, this legislation strengthens public trust in Rhode Island’s firearms laws. A transparent review process demonstrates that the state values accountability and is committed to treating all applicants equitably—whether they apply through a local police department or the Attorney General’s office. States like Massachusetts and Connecticut have successfully implemented appeal mechanisms for firearm permits, reducing disputes and ensuring consistent application of their laws. Rhode Island, with its strong record of low gun violence, can similarly benefit from a system that invites scrutiny and upholds integrity without compromising safety.

HB 5936 does not weaken our existing standards; it reinforces them by ensuring that denials are justified and defensible. It respects the authority of licensing bodies while affirming the rights of individuals to question decisions that affect them. I respectfully urge the Judiciary Committee to vote YES on HB 5936, providing Rhode Islanders with a fair, accessible, and structured process to review and appeal handgun permit decisions. Thank you for your attention to this important measure.

Sincerely,

Paul Larkin

Richmond, RI