



Nicole Alexander-Scott, MD, MPH
Director

Department of Health
Three Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908-5097

TTY: 711
www.health.ri.gov

March 19, 2021

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr.
House Committee on Judiciary
State House
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H 5553 - AN ACT RELATING TO CRIMINAL OFFENSES – WEAPONS
H 5554 - AN ACT RELATING TO CRIMINAL OFFENSES -- LARGE
CAPACITY FEEDING DEVICE BAN OF 2021
H 5555 - AN ACT RELATING TO CRIMINAL OFFENSES – WEAPONS
H 5556 - AN ACT RELATING TO CRIMINAL OFFENSES -- ASSAULT
WEAPONS

Dear Chairman Craven:

I am writing in support of H 5553, H 5554, H 5555, and H 5556.

H 5553 would create a new offense and would make it a felony for the owner of any firearm to store the firearm unlocked. Failure to store the firearm locked would subject the owner to a fine of not more than \$3,000. If the owner of a firearm leaves it loaded and a child gets access and causes injury, then the owner can be subject to a penalty of up to five years imprisonment and/or a fine of not more than \$5,000.

H 5554 would make it a felony for an individual to possess any semi-automatic firearm magazine which is capable of holding more than 10 rounds of ammunition. Violation would be punishable by up to five years imprisonment or a fine of up to \$5,000. There are limited exceptions for firearms dealers, law enforcement, and military.

H 5555 would prohibit the possession of firearms on school grounds except for peace officers, retired law enforcement officers, persons under contract to provide school security services, and unloaded firearms in locked containers or a locked rack on motor vehicles.

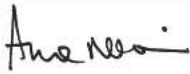
H 5556 would ban the possession, sale, and transfer of assault weapons. Possession of assault weapons owned on the effective date of this act would be "grandfathered" subject to certain registration provisions. Violations are punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000, or up to 10 years imprisonment.

As the Director of the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH), I am deeply concerned about the horror and adverse effects of firearm-related injuries and violence in our state and in the nation. Each day, individuals, families, and children must deal with the physical, social, and psychological costs associated with preventable, self-inflicted, accidental, and violent injuries and deaths from firearms. No Rhode Islander should have to worry about gun violence occurring in their neighborhood and schools. Gun violence is a public health crisis and the legislation described above will take necessary steps to protect Rhode Island communities.

From 2014 to 2018, 208 Rhode Islanders died as a result of firearms. Of these tragic deaths, 70% were due to suicide or intentional self-harm and 27% were due to homicide. Three percent (3%) of the deaths were due to undetermined intent or other causes. Each of these deaths was preventable and all were tragic. The one common denominator was access to a firearm. Future access to other types of firearms or storage devices can also limit or reduce the potential for further firearm deaths.

It is for these reasons that I encourage your favorable consideration of this important legislative package.

Sincerely,



for

Nicole Alexander-Scott, MD, MPH
Director

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Judiciary
The Honorable Justine A. Caldwell
The Honorable Katherine S. Kazarian
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House