



RHODE ISLAND MEDICAL SOCIETY

Chairperson Robert Craven
House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

2024-HB 7217 SUPPORT

March 13, 2024

Dear Chairperson Craven:

The Rhode Island Medical Society thanks Representative Jason Knight for introducing H 7217 An Act Relating To Criminal Offenses -- Assault Weapons. The bill bans the possession, sale, and transfer of assault weapons. Possession of assault weapons owned on the effective date of this act to be "grandfathered". Violations are punishable by a fine or imprisonment.

Regulating assault weapons is not only a matter of public safety but also a crucial step towards preventing mass casualties and preserving the well-being of our communities. According to a 2020 poll conducted by the Center for Research & Public Policy for RICAGV, 70.5% of Rhode Islanders support regulating assault weapons, highlighting the widespread concern regarding this issue.

Studies have shown that the federal prohibition on assault weapons from 1994 to 2004 resulted in a 70% decrease in mass shooting fatalities. Additionally, incidents involving assault weapons between 2009 and 2020 resulted in significantly higher casualties compared to those where such weapons were not used, as reported by the Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund.

Furthermore, medical experts affirm that assault weapons cause devastating injuries upon impact, leading to catastrophic damage to the human body. Dr. Ernest E. Moore, in reference to the Parkland, FL school shooting, describes the horrific injuries inflicted by assault weapons, emphasizing the urgent need to regulate their access.

Contrary to misconceptions, regulating assault weapons is constitutional and has been upheld by courts across the country, including ten states and the District of Columbia that have implemented similar prohibitions. Lower courts have consistently affirmed the constitutionality of these laws, further validating their legitimacy.

In conclusion, the Rhode Island Medical Society strongly urges the committee to support the ban on assault weapons in Rhode Island. This critical measure will enhance public safety, protect law enforcement officers, and save countless lives from preventable tragedies. We must take decisive action to ensure a safer and more secure future for all Rhode Islanders.

Thank you for your attention to this vital matter. Should you require any further information or assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Heather Smith, MD, MPH
President