



March 13, 2024

Chair Robert E. Craven, Sr.
House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Support for H-7217 – Assault Weapons

Dear Chair Craven and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

The Rhode Island Chapter of the National Organization for Women (RI NOW) supports H-7217 to ban the possession, sale, and transfer of assault weapons after the date of this bill's passage. We are all painfully aware of the ever increasing and tragic incidence of mass fatalities and horrific injuries due to assault weapons.

The design of assault weapons allows the shooter to fire at a faster rate, hold more ammunition, and cause more damage to the human body, leading to more deaths and inflicting far more serious injuries than other types of guns. They are better suited for military use on a battlefield than at home for individual protection.

A 2019 study by Everytown for Gun Safety shows that during the ten years that a federal ban against assault weapons was in effect (1994-2004), mass shootings were 70% less likely. Ten other states in the U.S. prohibit assault weapons at this point in time.

Assault weapons are not being taken away from current lawful owners. Instead, the conditions under which current ownership of lawfully obtained assault weapons will be grandfathered in are outlined in this bill.

With multiple tragedies involving assault weapons occurring throughout the country in places such as Uvalde, Texas, Parkland, Florida, Newtown, Connecticut, and far too many other examples, we owe it to children who may be understandably afraid to go to school each day something more effective than disruptive and frightening emergency drills before such a tragedy and thoughts and prayers afterwards. 70.5% of Rhode Islanders support an assault weapons ban according to a 2020 poll. Rhode Island has made some crucial gun safety improvements in recent sessions and this is our opportunity to build on that critical trajectory. RI NOW supports passage of H-7217 and we strongly urge you to pass it out of committee and bring it to the floor for a vote.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,



Lesley Bunnell
President
RI NOW



Giona Picheco
Legislative Chair
RI NOW

With support from Jessie Kingston, RI NOW member.

Rhode Island National Organization for Women (RI NOW) is a membership-based advocacy organization with hundreds of members and supporters throughout the state of Rhode Island. Our mission is to take action to bring women into full participation in all aspects of public and private life without experiencing barriers based on gender. Our key issue areas include economic equity, ending violence against women, reproductive health and justice, 2SLGBTQIA+ civil rights, and ending racism.