



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

2025-HB 5436 SUPPORT

March 26, 2025

Dear Chairperson Craven:

The Rhode Island Medical Society thanks Representative Jason Knight for introducing H 7217, *An Act Relating to Criminal Offenses – Assault Weapons*. This bill establishes the Rhode Island Assault Weapons Ban Act of 2025, a necessary measure to protect the health and safety of our communities.

Regulating assault weapons is a proven public health intervention. These weapons are designed for rapid fire and maximum lethality, leading to disproportionately high fatalities and severe injuries in mass shootings. According to the RAND Corporation and other peer-reviewed analyses, assault weapons and high-capacity magazines are consistently linked with higher numbers of deaths and injuries in mass shootings.

A 2023 Gallup poll found that 61% of Americans support a ban on assault weapons, and a 2020 survey by the Center for Research & Public Policy for RICAGV showed that 70.5% of Rhode Islanders support regulating assault weapons, underscoring the broad public consensus on this issue.

Historical data supports the effectiveness of regulation. The 1994–2004 federal assault weapons ban was associated with a 70% reduction in mass shooting fatalities during its enforcement period, according to a 2019 study in the *Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery*. After the ban expired, the number and deadliness of mass shootings increased sharply. From 2009 to 2020, incidents involving assault weapons accounted for six times as many people shot per incident and twice as many fatalities, according to the Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund. These tragedies are not just statistics—they represent real individuals whose lives could have been saved by sensible regulation.

From a clinical standpoint, the damage caused by assault weapons is catastrophic. Trauma surgeons and emergency physicians, including Dr. Ernest E. Moore, have documented the devastating, non-survivable injuries inflicted by high-velocity rounds, particularly in school shootings like Parkland, Florida. These weapons obliterate tissue, cause massive internal bleeding, and leave even the most skilled medical teams unable to save victims.

Assault weapon regulation is also constitutional. Ten states and the District of Columbia currently enforce assault weapon bans, and courts have consistently upheld the legality of these measures, affirming the state's right to protect public health and safety through reasonable firearm regulation.

The Rhode Island Medical Society strongly urges the committee to support H 7217. This legislation is a vital step to protect our residents, reduce the burden of gun violence on our healthcare system, and prevent future mass casualty events.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We are available to provide additional information or expert testimony at your request.

Sincerely,

Kara Stavros, MD
President