

Ariana Costa

From: Paul Larkin <plarkin@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 25, 2025 7:19 AM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: Opposition to 5654

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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To the Honorable Members of the Rhode Island Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to strongly oppose HB 5654 – Weapons – Concealed Carry Permit Restrictions for Out-of-State Residents, which would prohibit local licensing authorities from issuing concealed carry permits to out-of-state residents based on permits issued by their home states or subdivisions. This bill unfairly targets law-abiding visitors and new residents, undermines the principle of reciprocity, and ignores the practical realities of interstate travel. I urge you to reject this legislation and preserve Rhode Island’s ability to fairly evaluate out-of-state permit holders.

Under current law, Rhode Island’s local licensing authorities, governed by R.I.G.L. § 11-47-11, operate on a “shall-issue” basis, requiring applicants—resident or non-resident—to meet consistent standards, including background checks and compliance with state regulations. This system allows out-of-state residents with valid permits from their home jurisdictions to apply for a Rhode Island permit, subject to the same scrutiny as locals. HB 5654 would eliminate this option, effectively barring non-residents from carrying concealed firearms in Rhode Island, even if they hold permits from states with rigorous vetting processes like Massachusetts, New Hampshire, or Connecticut. This creates an arbitrary double standard, punishing responsible gun owners simply for living across state lines.

Reciprocity is a cornerstone of concealed carry laws nationwide, with over 40 states recognizing out-of-state permits to some degree. Rhode Island’s current approach—allowing local authorities to issue permits based on an applicant’s existing credentials—aligns with this principle, fostering cooperation and mutual respect among states. HB 5654 abandons that spirit, isolating Rhode Island and potentially inviting retaliatory restrictions from neighboring states. For example, a Rhode Island resident with a local permit could lose the ability to carry in Maine or Vermont if those states mirror this exclusionary policy. This bill risks turning a practical system into a patchwork of barriers, complicating travel for law-abiding citizens.

The practical implications are equally concerning. Out-of-state residents—whether commuters, seasonal visitors, or those relocating—often rely on their home state permits as proof of eligibility when applying in Rhode Island. A truck driver from Massachusetts, a retiree wintering in Narragansett, or a student attending URI might need to carry for self-defense, just as residents do. HB 5654 would force these individuals to either forgo their rights or navigate an entirely new permitting process without leveraging their existing credentials, despite having already passed thorough background checks elsewhere. Rhode Island’s low gun violence rates demonstrate that our current system, which includes non-resident permits, works without compromising safety—there’s no evidence that out-of-state permit holders pose a unique risk.

Rather than imposing a blanket prohibition, the Committee should trust local authorities to continue vetting non-resident applicants as they do now, ensuring consistency with Rhode Island standards. HB 5654 overreaches, stripping away flexibility and fairness for no clear gain. I respectfully urge you to vote NO on this bill and maintain a system that respects the rights of all law-abiding individuals, regardless of residency. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Paul Larkin

Richmond, RI