

Chairperson Craven and Members of House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 5935.

There are several key changes to statutes 11-47-2, 11-47-9, 11-47-11, 11-47-12, and 11-47-18 that I fully agree with. It is long overdue for Rhode Island to recognize law-abiding citizens from other states with a valid concealed carry permit (CCW), much like we do with other licenses, such as those for driving and marriage. By doing so, Rhode Island would enter into reciprocal agreements with many other states, eliminating the need for Rhode Islanders to apply for permits in every other state across the country.

This bill would also allow law enforcement officers to carry firearms without a permit, which is an important and beneficial change. More importantly, it would help streamline and clarify the current CCW application process in several ways:

1. **Clearer Definition of "Suitable Person"**

The bill provides a more precise definition of what constitutes a "suitable person," ensuring greater consistency and fairness.

2. **Clearer Application Requirements**

Currently, over 30 cities and towns in Rhode Island have different application requirements, ranging from references and recommendation letters to proof of address, medical waivers, psychological exams (which don't exist), and financial disclosures. This inconsistency creates confusion and delays. This bill would standardize these requirements across all cities and towns, ensuring fairness and clarity.

3. **Timely Decision-Making**

The bill establishes a 90-day timeframe for decisions to be made on applications. Presently, the timeline for approval varies drastically, from just a few weeks to over a year, which is unacceptable. As Martin Luther King, Jr. famously said, "A right delayed is a right denied."

4. **Appeal Process**

The bill introduces an appeal process, which has been sorely lacking. Many applicants who are unjustly denied do not have the financial resources to pursue legal action. An official appeal process will give applicants the opportunity to seek justice and hold authorities accountable.

5. **Protection of Privacy**

The bill ensures that all application information is sealed, safeguarding the privacy of applicants and upholding their constitutional rights.

I strongly urge you to support this bill and allow vote for it to move forward for a vote on the House floor. This legislation will improve the process, uphold constitutional rights, and promote fairness for all Rhode Islanders.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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