

Ariana Costa

From: Paul Larkin <plarkin@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 25, 2025 7:15 AM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: Support for HB 5935

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

I am writing to voice my enthusiastic support for HB 5935 – Weapons – Concealed Carry Reform and Out-of-State Permit Recognition. This bill takes meaningful steps to enhance firearm rights and improve the concealed carry framework in Rhode Island by recognizing out-of-state permits, allowing concealed carry during emergency evacuations, and establishing an appeal process for permit denials. These reforms promote consistency, practicality, and fairness, benefiting law-abiding citizens while maintaining public safety. I urge you to vote in favor of this forward-thinking legislation.

First, recognizing out-of-state concealed carry permits aligns Rhode Island with the majority of states that honor reciprocity. Currently, Rhode Island's lack of reciprocity forces lawful permit holders from states like Massachusetts, New Hampshire, or Maine to disarm when crossing our borders, despite having undergone rigorous vetting in their home states. This patchwork approach creates confusion and penalizes responsible gun owners who travel for work, family, or recreation. HB 5935 would bring Rhode Island in line with over 40 states that recognize out-of-state permits, fostering uniformity and respecting the rights of visitors and new residents alike. Our state's strict permitting standards—under R.I.G.L. § 11-47-11 and § 11-47-18—will still apply to Rhode Islanders, ensuring that reciprocity does not compromise local oversight.

Second, authorizing concealed carry during emergency evacuations is a commonsense measure that enhances personal safety in times of crisis. Natural disasters, such as hurricanes or floods, can displace residents and disrupt law enforcement response, leaving individuals vulnerable as they flee to safety. Rhode Island's coastal location makes such scenarios all too plausible. Permitting concealed carry during these evacuations empowers law-abiding citizens to protect themselves and their families when traditional support systems are strained. This provision is not about encouraging vigilantism but about recognizing the reality of emergencies—a practical step already adopted by states like Florida and Texas with no evidence of increased risk.

Finally, establishing an appeal process for denied permits addresses a critical gap in our current system. Whether denied by local authorities ("shall-issue") or the Attorney General ("discretionary"), applicants deserve a clear path to challenge errors or unjust decisions. For instance, a denial might stem from a mistaken identity, an expunged record, or an unclear "showing of need"—issues that a fair review could resolve. Without HB 5935, such denials can leave individuals without recourse, forcing them into costly litigation or abandonment of their rights. An appeal process ensures due process, increases transparency, and builds trust in our licensing system, all while preserving the authority of issuing bodies to maintain safety standards.

Rhode Island's low gun violence rates reflect the strength of our existing laws, but HB 5935 makes them better by adapting to modern needs. It respects the rights of out-of-state permit holders, equips citizens for emergencies, and guarantees fairness in permitting—all without undermining the rigorous checks that keep our communities safe. I respectfully urge the Judiciary Committee to vote YES on HB 5935, advancing a balanced and practical reform that benefits Rhode Islanders and visitors alike. Thank you for your consideration of this important bill.

Sincerely,

Paul Larkin

Richmond, RI