



June, 03 2025

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr., Chair

House Judiciary Committee

Rhode Island Statehouse

Providence, 02903

RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill 5436–Rhode Island Assault Weapons Ban Act

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, we express our strong support for **House Bill 5436**, the Rhode Island Assault Weapons Ban Act of 2025. Through our **ADVOCATE UNITED** initiative, part of the **LIVE UNITED 2025 Strategic Plan**, we are committed to building safer, more just communities by addressing the root causes of violence and supporting policies that protect public safety, promote equity, and prevent harm before it occurs. This legislation represents a critical step forward in advancing community well-being by reducing access to assault-weapons in our neighborhoods.

House Bill 5436 would prohibit the manufacture, sale, purchase, and possession of defined assault weapons in Rhode Island. These firearms, designed for rapid fire and maximum lethality, have been repeatedly used in some of the nation's deadliest mass shootings. Evidence shows that during the federal assault weapons ban (1994–2004), the risk of dying in a mass shooting was **70% lower** than in the periods before and after the law (Lopez, 2022). Additionally, researchers estimate that the federal ban prevented **at least 11 public mass shootings** over its 10-year span, saving countless lives (Everytown for Gun Safety, 2021).

While Rhode Island has one of the lowest firearm death rates in the country—**3.1 deaths per 100,000 residents**, compared to the national average of 14.7—this legislation will help preserve that status and prevent future tragedies (CDC, 2022). Ensuring that weapons designed for combat do not circulate in civilian communities is not only a public safety imperative—it is a public health necessity.

All Rhode Islanders deserve to live in communities free from the threat of violence. Supporting **House Bill 5436** will help prevent mass shootings, reduce the availability of highly lethal firearms, and reinforce our collective commitment to building neighborhoods where children can grow up safely,

[Uniting our community and resources to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders.](#)

families can gather without fear, and all residents—regardless of zip code—can thrive in peace. We urge you to advance this critical legislation to create a safer, healthier, and more resilient Rhode Island for all.

Sincerely,

Elijah McLean

Manager, Government Relations & Policy

United Way Rhode Island