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**LWVRI Written Testimony Submitted in Support of Four Gun Safety Measures:
H7557, H7757, H8069 and H8073**

Chair Hagan McEntee and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

The League of Women Voters of RI (LWVRI)¹ submits this testimony **in support of four gun safety measures** scheduled for consideration by the Committee on Wednesday, April 8, 2026: **H7557** (The Rhode Island Firearm Industry Accountability Act of 2026); **H7755** (Responsible Firearm Purchasing Act); **H8069** (An Act Relating To Criminal Offenses – Weapons); and **H8073** (Unlawful Sale Of Prohibited Firearms).

In the wake of the continued national tragedies of repeated and preventable mass shootings and gun deaths, the League is urging action on comprehensive gun legislation at both the state and federal levels.

H7557, The Rhode Island Firearm Industry Accountability Act of 2026

Like any business, gun companies should be held accountable for irresponsible behavior that harms the public. Victims of the firearms industry’s negligence and misconduct deserve the same access to the civil court system as all other victims of negligence and misconduct.

Currently, federal law provides sweeping immunity to the gun industry from most types of civil lawsuits—exempting highly profitable corporations from most normal mechanisms of accountability in court. No other industry in America enjoys this kind of protection. But, states are not powerless to act to promote victims’ rights. The federal firearm industry immunity law allows lawsuits to proceed if victims of gun violence can prove they were harmed by a firearm industry member’s violation of state laws regulating the firearm industry. This preserves a clear role for states to adopt and enforce standards of responsible business conduct for the firearm industry, including manufacturers, distributors, and dealers, and to create a clear cause of action for victims harmed by violations of state law.

H7557 establishes a firearm industry standard of responsible business conduct and would ensure that irresponsible gun companies can be held accountable by those they harm by including a cause of action to ensure victims of gun violence (or the state’s attorney general acting on their behalf) can seek fair justice in court if they can prove they suffered actual harm as a result of a gun industry member’s irresponsible conduct.

This is a commonsense measure that deserves the support of this Committee. We encourage the Committee to favorably report the bill to the full House.

H7755, The Responsible Firearm Purchasing Act

This legislation would update the Blue Card application process to purchase a firearm (last updated in 1998) by requiring those seeking to possess a firearm, with the exception of police and military personnel, to complete and pass a basic firearm safety training course. Certainly, we can all agree that anyone who purchases a deadly weapon should prove they can use it safely and responsibly. More than 15 other states

¹ LWVRI is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering voters and defending democracy. Through education, advocacy, and civic education, LWVRI works to ensure that every Rhode Islander can participate fully in the democratic process.

have passed similar laws and have seen significant reductions in gun homicide rates. For example, Connecticut saw a 28% reduction in homicides and a 33% reduction in gun suicides after adopting a similar requirement. Passage of H 7755 could yield similar results in reductions of gun homicides and suicides here in Rhode Island.

H8069, An Act Relating To Criminal Offenses – Weapons

H8069 is a simple, reasonable proposal that would require privately owned shooting ranges to post signage with contact information for the Suicide and Crisis hotline. It is possible that two recent, tragic gun suicides at a Tiverton shooting range may have been averted if such signage had been present. Suicide and Crisis hotline signage appear in public spaces all over Rhode Island, including schools, medical buildings, grocery stores, parks, and hiking trails. It only makes sense that hotline signs should be posted in shooting ranges. H 8069 would also require shooting range employees to be trained to recognize the warning signs of suicide. Such training could also help prevent a distressed person from committing suicide.

H8073, Unlawful Sale of Prohibited Firearms

This measure would build on the solid foundation adopted last year restricting the sale of military style weapons, including assault-style rifles such as the AR-15. That legislation was an important step forward but did not go far enough. The 2025 law did not cover some assault-style pistols and shotguns and, critically, did not ban possession. This makes it difficult to enforce and leaves dangerous weapons in circulation. A ban on possession is the next logical step, ensuring that firearms deemed too dangerous to sell cannot be possessed. Furthermore, it falls short of the standards adopted in our neighboring states.

Assault weapons are exceptionally deadly firearms commonplace in mass shootings. Between 2015 and 2022, when assault weapons were used in a mass shooting, six times as many people were shot, twice as many people were killed, and 23 times as many people were wounded per incident on average, compared to mass shootings where assault weapons were not used. Rounds fired from an assault weapon inflict more horrific damage to the human body and are more likely to cause fatality than rounds from a typical handgun.

The League of Women Voters, both nationally and here in Rhode Island, believes that the proliferation of semiautomatic assault weapons in our country is a public health and safety issue that should be addressed on both a federal and state level. According to polls, 70% of Rhode Islanders support regulation of assault weapons. In the absence of federal law prohibiting assault weapons, it is up to Rhode Island to act, joining the 10 other states that have passed such legislation, including neighboring Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York.

Assault weapons are weapons of warfare and do not belong in the hands of civilians. The League believes that restricting assault weapons is a common-sense public safety measure. H 8073 would protect Rhode Islanders by reducing the likelihood of mass shooting injuries and deaths via assault weapons.

The League of Women Voters of Rhode Island supports sensible gun safety measures. We respectfully urge this Committee to favorably report this package of commonsense gun laws to the full House.

Thank you for your consideration.

Gene Thompson-Grove
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