

April 7, 2026

Diana Garlington
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RE: Testimony in Support of Bill No. 7557 ~ An Act Relating to the Rhode Island Firearm Industry Accountability Act of 2026

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Diana Garlington, and I am a policy advocate, community leader, and the mother of Essence T. Christal, whose life was taken by gun violence. I am here today in strong support of this legislation.

For me, this issue is not abstract, it is deeply personal. When my daughter was killed, I entered a world where accountability was hard to find. Not only in the justice system, but across the systems that allow firearms to be accessed, marketed, and used without enough responsibility.

This bill is about responsibility.

The Rhode Island Firearm Industry Accountability Act of 2026 recognizes that firearm industry members must play a role in preventing harm. By requiring stronger controls on the possession and distribution of firearms, and by addressing how

these products are advertised, this legislation takes an important step toward reducing preventable violence.

We cannot continue to treat gun violence as inevitable. It is preventable. And prevention requires shared accountability.

In my work with Safer Communities for Justice, I have supported families impacted by violence, many of whom are still waiting for answers, healing, and justice. I have also worked alongside community partners, lawmakers, and advocates to pass meaningful legislation, including laws that prioritize safety and save lives. What we know is this: when we strengthen policy, we strengthen communities.

This bill aligns with that truth.

It helps ensure that firearms are not marketed irresponsibly, that safeguards are in place, and that industry actors are held to standards that reflect the seriousness of their products. Just like any other industry whose products can cause harm, there must be accountability when negligence contributes to danger.

My daughter was not just a number. She was born, she was named, and she was loved. And like so many others, she deserved a future. Passing this legislation is one way we honor lives like hers, not just with words, but with action.

I respectfully urge you to support the Rhode Island Firearm Industry Accountability Act of 2026.

Thank you for your time and consideration.