



Testimony of Liddy Renner, Senior Manager, State Policy  
Support for H7557  
Before the House Judiciary Committee  
April 8, 2026

Chair McEntee and Distinguished Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

Founded in 1974, Brady works to change the law, change the industry, and change culture to free America from gun violence. Our organization today carries the name of Jim Brady, who was shot and severely injured in the assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan. Jim and his wife, Sarah, led the fight to pass federal legislation requiring background checks for gun sales. Brady continues to uphold Jim and Sarah's legacy by uniting Americans across the country in the fight to prevent gun violence.

**In pursuit of our goal to reduce firearm violence across Rhode Island, the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence is proud to support the passage of H7557.** H7557 creates a path for gun industry members to be held accountable for dangerous, unlawful, negligent and unsafe business practices that impact Rhode Islanders and removes barriers that currently prevent victims and survivors from obtaining justice in the courtroom.

**PLCAA Denies Justice to Victims and Survivors**

Victims of gun violence should have recourse for the gun industry's negligence and dangerous practices just like those harmed by any other business enjoy. But the Protection of Lawful Commerce In Arms Act "PLCAA" currently protects many irresponsible gun dealers and manufacturers from being held responsible. Consistent with every other industry, gun dealers and manufacturers should be held responsible for negligent and irresponsible sales practices that are the proximate cause of an individual's injuries or death, and for selling to someone who is likely to harm themselves or others. Manufacturers who design firearms without life-saving safety features, such as chamber-loaded indicators and magazine disconnect safeties, or sell to someone who is clearly likely to harm themselves should be held liable for their design failures and malpractice.<sup>1</sup>

**PLCAA Perpetuates the Flow of Crime Guns into Communities of Color and Disincentivizes Safe Business Practices**

The latest available data from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF)

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<sup>1</sup> Vernick, J. et al., 1999. "I Didn't Know the Gun Was Loaded": An Examination of Two Safety Devices That Can Reduce the Risk of Unintentional Firearm Injuries," Journal of Public Health Policy, 20(4), pp.427-440, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3343129?seq=1>

reveals that just 2.7 percent of dealers accounted for over 71 percent of crime gun traces.<sup>2</sup> While this small minority of gun dealers are the sources of crime guns recovered in communities of color, these gun dealers typically sit outside those communities in less diverse and more affluent suburbs.<sup>3</sup> Residents of these communities suffer from the chronic stress of daily interpersonal gun violence and the negative impacts on their community's economic prosperity, without recourse or compensation, while irresponsible gun dealers face no consequences.

In addition to exacerbating racial disparities in gun violence, PLCAA stymies life-saving innovation. The mere threat of civil liability motivates companies to adopt safe business practices that prevent future injuries and death.<sup>4</sup> For example, car manufacturers made numerous safety improvements that have cut automobile-related deaths by 50 percent since the 1960s, primarily because of technological advancements spurred by fear of liability.<sup>5</sup> PLCAA effectively removed this motivation for the gun industry, disincentivizing gun dealers from adopting safe sales practices and gun manufacturers from incorporating affordable life-saving safety devices into their products and monitoring their distribution practices.<sup>6</sup> The limitations on the ability to hold the industry accountable prevent public awareness and deter regulatory changes, as well as disincentivize independent action by the industry to avoid liability, all of which would reduce gun violence and save lives.

### **What H7557 Does**

PLCAA does have several exceptions including what is known as the “predicate exception.” The predicate exception permits lawsuits to proceed where there is a knowing violation of a state law applicable to the sale or marketing of [firearms] by such gun industry actors.<sup>7</sup>

H7557 will create the law that functions as a predicate exception to PLCAA, ensuring that valid civil claims can be brought against the gun industry for their dangerous, negligent, and unlawful actions. To be clear, H7557 is not a rubber stamp for frivolous lawsuits; any plaintiffs will have to prove that they have a valid claim. H7557 merely creates the opportunity for those harmed by irresponsible business practices to have their day in court. Having operated with special protections for years, the industry has had no financial incentive to curb irresponsible conduct and instead puts profits over people. Therefore, the possibility of civil liability will not only provide civil justice to victims and survivors but also encourage the gun industry to act responsibly to help stem the tide of crime guns that harm the people of Rhode Island, particularly in urban areas where communities of color are disproportionately harmed.

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<sup>2</sup> Department of the Treasury, “Commerce in Firearms in the United States,” Bureau of ATF (Feb. 2000), available at [http://www.joebrower.com/RKBA/RKBA\\_FILES/GOV\\_DOCS/BATF\\_report\\_020400.pdf](http://www.joebrower.com/RKBA/RKBA_FILES/GOV_DOCS/BATF_report_020400.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Brady Campaign and Brady Center, “*Crime Guns in Impacted Communities*,” Brady, available at <https://www.bradyunited.org/reports/crime-guns-in-impacted-communities>.

<sup>4</sup> Vernick, J. et al., 2003. “Role of Litigation in Preventing Product-related Injuries,” *Epidemiologic Reviews*, 25(1), pp.90-98, available at <https://academic.oup.com/epirev/article/25/1/90/718671>.

<sup>5</sup> LaFrance, Adrienne, “Why Haven’t Gunmakers Improved Safety Technology the Way Automakers Did?”, *The Atlantic* (Jan. 21, 2016), available at <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2016/01/guns-cars/424878/>.

<sup>6</sup> Sampson, Kelly, “Tobacco Kills People. Opioids Kill People. But Guns Don’t?”, Brady (Sept. 4, 2019), available at <https://bradyunited.medium.com/tobacco-kills-people-opioids-kill-people-but-guns-dont-7852c288d496>.

<sup>7</sup> “Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act” 15 U.S.C. §7903(5)(A)(iii)

## **Conclusion**

As originally introduced, H7557 will function as an exception to PLCAA, ensuring that valid civil claims can be brought against the gun industry for their dangerous, negligent, and even unlawful actions. The possibility of civil liability will not only provide civil justice to victims and survivors but also encourage the gun industry to act responsibly to help stem the tide of crime guns that harm Rhode Islanders, particularly in urban areas where communities of color are disproportionately harmed. Having operated with special protections for years, the industry has had no financial incentive to curb irresponsible conduct and instead puts profits over people. The prospect of civil liability can lead to safer products and better conduct that the industry has resisted for years.

No industry should be above the law, especially not one that makes and sells lethal weapons. H7557 will ensure that bad actors in the gun industry are held accountable and victims of gun violence are able to get justice through the law. ***For the reasons described above, Brady strongly urges this committee to support H7557.***

Sincerely,  
Liddy Renner  
Senior Manager, State Policy  
Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence