

Chairperson McEntee, Representative Messier, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to respectfully oppose House Bill 7755, the "Responsible Firearm Purchasing Act."

While I support the importance of firearm safety and responsible ownership, this bill imposes significant new barriers on the ability of law-abiding citizens to exercise a constitutional right.

H7755 would require any individual seeking to purchase a firearm to first complete an extensive, state-approved training course, pass a standardized test, and obtain certification controlled by the Attorney General's office. These requirements are in addition to existing safeguards, including background checks, waiting periods, and current application processes. Rather than improving the existing system, this bill lays additional burdens on individuals who are already complying with the law.

A primary concern is that this proposal conditions the exercise of a constitutional right on time, cost, and government approval. Individuals would be required to pay for training, take significant time to complete an eight-hour course, and navigate a state-controlled certification process before they are even eligible to purchase a firearm. This creates a system where access to a fundamental right is dependent on one's financial means and availability.

In that respect, this requirement risks functioning similarly to a financial barrier on the exercise of constitutional rights. Just as courts have rejected conditioning other rights on the ability to pay, imposing mandatory costs and prerequisites before a citizen may exercise their rights raises serious constitutional concerns.

Additionally, by centralizing control of training, certification, and instructor approval within the Attorney General's office, the bill creates a potential bottleneck. Access to training could become limited by availability, scheduling, or administrative decisions, effectively delaying or denying lawful access without any change in a person's legal eligibility.

It is also important to note that this bill applies broadly to all firearms, including rifles and shotguns, significantly expanding its impact. At the same time, it does not remove any existing requirements, meaning law-abiding citizens would face multiple layers of regulation before exercising their rights.

Finally, while training and education are valuable and should be encouraged, making them mandatory as a prerequisite to exercising a constitutional right is fundamentally different. Encouragement and access to training promote responsible ownership; mandatory preconditions risk turning a right into a privilege.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to hold House Bill 7755 for further study and not advance it to the House floor.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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