

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

I am writing to respectfully oppose House Bill 8068.

This bill appears to be more symbolic than substantive. Rhode Island law already clearly prohibits firearm possession by individuals under the age of eighteen, with specific and well-defined exceptions for supervised activities such as hunting, training, and sport shooting. H8068 does not meaningfully change that standard, expand protections, or address any identified gap in the current law.

As written, this proposal simply restates existing statutes without improving public safety. Passing redundant legislation risks creating confusion and adds unnecessary complexity to laws that are already in place and understood. Legislative efforts should be focused on meaningful improvements and effective enforcement, not duplicative measures that do not produce measurable results.

I am also concerned that legislation like this may serve as a foundation for future incremental changes. We have seen similar approaches taken in other areas of firearm policy, where a law is first passed in a limited or symbolic form and then expanded in subsequent sessions. For example, restrictions that initially applied only to the purchase of certain firearms are later broadened to include possession. This step-by-step approach can significantly alter the scope of the law over time, often without fully revisiting the underlying policy debate.

If that is the intent here, it should be clearly stated and openly debated. Changes that affect constitutional rights should be addressed transparently and comprehensively, not incrementally through successive revisions to previously enacted statutes.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to hold H8068 for further study and not advance it to the House floor.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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