

April 7, 2026

House Judiciary Committee

Rhode Island State House Providence, RI 02903

RE: Testimony in Support of Bill No. 8073 ~ AN ACT RELATING TO
CRIMINAL OFFENSES -- UNLAWFUL SALE OF PROHIBITED FIREARMS

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Diana Garlington. I am a policy advocate, community leader, and the mother of Esscence T. Christal, whose life was taken by gun violence. I am here today in strong support of House Bill H 8073.

This bill is about safety. It is about prevention. And most importantly, it is about saving lives.

In my work with Safer Communities for Justice, Moms Demand Action, and the RI Coalition Against Gun Violence, and through years of advocacy, I have stood with families across Rhode Island who are living with unimaginable loss. Too often, we see the same pattern, access to dangerous firearms leads to irreversible harm. These are not isolated incidents. They are preventable tragedies.

Restricting the possession of prohibited firearms is a necessary step toward reducing that harm.

Weapons designed for rapid and devastating impact do not belong in our communities. If a weapon can tear through an animal, causing that kind of damage, then it has no place in the spaces where our families live, walk, and grow. We are not battlefields. These weapons increase

the risk of mass harm, escalate everyday conflicts, and leave families like mine forever changed. This legislation acknowledges that some firearms are simply too dangerous for public access.

We have already seen that strong, thoughtful policy can make a difference. Rhode Island has taken steps forward in addressing gun violence, and this bill continues that progress by putting public safety first.

For me, this is not just policy, it is personal.

My daughter was not just a number. She was born, she was named, and she was loved. And like so many others, her life was taken too soon. I often think about what could have been different, what policies, what protections, what decisions might have changed the outcome. We cannot go back, but we can act now.

Passing House Bill H 8073 is one way we take responsibility for the safety of our communities. It is one way we say that prevention matters. It is one way we ensure that fewer families have to stand where I stand today.

I respectfully urge you to support this legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Diana Garlington

Founder, Safer Communities for Justice

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