

**HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE  
RHODE ISLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
STATE HOUSE  
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND**

April 8, 2026

**Re: Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 8073 and Related Firearm Legislation**

Dear Chairwoman McEntee and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

My name is Hunter Schnelle, and I am a resident of Jamestown, Rhode Island, in House District 74.

I am writing in opposition to House Bill 8073, titled “An Act Relating to Criminal Offenses — Unlawful Sale of Prohibited Firearms,” as well as the broader package of firearm legislation being considered alongside it.

While I do not have time to address each bill individually, I want to state clearly that I have serious concerns with the cumulative impact of this legislative package, particularly those measures that expand restrictions on lawful ownership, impose new financial burdens, and criminalize possession.

First, HB 8073 builds on S 0359 Sub A (2025) by not only regulating the sale of certain firearms but by banning their possession as well. It makes it illegal for Rhode Islanders to keep firearms that are currently owned legally, with penalties of up to ten years in prison and substantial fines. This is not a narrow regulation—it is a broad prohibition backed by felony-level penalties. It risks turning otherwise responsible, law-abiding citizens into criminals, without clear evidence that such a sweeping measure will improve public safety.

I speak from personal experience. When I was 18, House Bill 7457 (2022) prevented me from legally purchasing a rifle, and I had to wait until I was 21 to exercise my right legally. This proposed legislation would prevent individuals younger than me from ever having the opportunity to experience what I — and many responsible Rhode Islanders — consider a fundamental right. It is a deeply personal concern that underscores the real-life impact of these broad restrictions.

Second, several bills in this package—including those restricting firearm purchases, requiring mandatory training and permitting changes, and imposing ammunition background checks—collectively create significant barriers for law-abiding individuals while doing little to address those who intentionally violate the law.

Third, I am particularly concerned about proposals that impose substantial financial requirements, such as mandatory liability insurance policies, which could effectively price

individuals out of exercising a lawful right. Policies like this raise serious questions about fairness and equal access.

Fourth, I am concerned that this legislation raises serious constitutional questions. The prohibition on possession of commonly owned firearms may conflict with protections recognized under the Second Amendment, and the forced dispossession of lawfully owned property without compensation raises concerns under the Fifth Amendment. These are significant issues that warrant careful consideration.

Additionally, I believe this package represents a departure from prior legislative assurances that earlier firearm regulations were not intended to take firearms from law-abiding citizens, but rather to address criminal misuse. HB 8073 and related measures move beyond that stated intent by directly restricting possession and ownership.

Finally, measures like these tend to have limited impact on those most likely to commit violent crimes. Individuals intent on breaking the law are unlikely to comply with new restrictions, meaning the primary effect is on those who already follow the law.

I respectfully urge the committee to vote against House Bill 8073 and to carefully reconsider the broader set of firearm-related proposals before you.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Hunter Schnelle



Jamestown, RI, 02835

House District 74