



**Testimony Re: House Bill 8073, An Act Relating to Criminal Offenses – Restricts the Possession of Prohibited Firearms**  
**House Judiciary Committee**  
**April 8, 2026**  
**Kelsey Bala, MPH - Senior Policy Associate**

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. We would like to thank Representative Tanzi for sponsoring this important bill and Representatives Boylan, Alzate, Stewart, Kislak, Handy, Ajello, and Giraldo for co-sponsoring. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its strong support for House Bill 8073, which would specify restrictions on the possession of prohibited firearms.

Nationally and in Rhode Island, gun reform remains a key area of focus, especially in the wake of the devastating mass shootings we have experienced here at home that fractured our communities. As we build back together, **we urge you to add “possession” of prohibited firearms to Rhode Island statute** to ensure these weapons are not in circulation in our communities.

Firearm related injuries remain the leading cause of death in the U.S. among children and youth ages one to 19, surpassing motor vehicle deaths and childhood cancers. **Nationally, youth gun deaths rose nearly 50% from 2019 to 2021.** American children and youth are 21 to 23 times more likely to be killed by a gun than their peers in other high-income countries. **Children who were born the year the historic Columbine massacre are now 27 years old. That means no youth in our country today know a world without the threat of sudden, deadly gun violence.**

We would like to thank the General Assembly for passing several common-sense measures to protect Rhode Islanders from gun violence and for their continued work to keep our children and families safe from preventable death and injury. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT believes these comprehensive state policies to reduce gun violence can be expanded to help **increase the safety of children in Rhode Island, and House Bill 8073 is a practical step to address the public health crisis of gun violence.**



**Gun-Related Emergency Department (ED) Visits, Hospitalizations, and Deaths Among Children and Youth, Rhode Island, 2020-2024**

AGE	# OF ED VISITS	# OF HOSPITALIZATIONS	# OF DEATHS
1 to 14	20	<5	<5
15 to 17	26	<5	6
18 to 19	59	19	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>&gt;14</b>

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, 2020-2024.

In Rhode Island between 2020 and 2024, there were 105 emergency department visits and 28 hospitalizations of children and youth for gun-related injuries. Between 2020 and 2024 in Rhode Island, at least 20% (14) of the 95 injury deaths of children and youth under age 20 were the result of firearms.

As we have seen in mass shootings, semi-automatic firearms allow a shooter to fire large quantities of bullets in a very short amount of time. Due to the rapid firing, this allows a shooter to injure and kill large numbers of people very quickly and often do not allow time for police to respond.

Our children deserve to have a childhood free from gun violence in their schools and communities, and it is within your legislative power to ensure that Rhode Island's statute on prohibited firearms includes possession. **California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Washington, and the District of Columbia have legislated bans on the purchase, possession, sale, manufacture, and/or transfer of assault weapons.** This is an American Academy of Pediatrics supported measure to aid in the protection of children from firearm-related injury and violence, and Rhode Island has the opportunity to codify this protection. Prohibiting only the future sale of prohibited firearms does not address the current threat of gun violence.

We strongly urge you to join our neighboring states and pass House Bill 8073 to add the possession of restricted firearms to the statute you passed last session. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.