

Roberta DiMezza

From: mikevergano@gmail.com
Sent: Wednesday, March 11, 2026 2:53 PM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Cc: Rep. Craven, Robert E.; Rep. McEntee, Carol Hagan; Rep. Knight, Jason; Rep. Ajello, Edith H.; Rep. Batista, Jose F.; Rep. Bennett, David A.; Rep. Caldwell, Justine A.; Rep. Casimiro, Julie A.; Rep. Corvese, Arthur J.; Rep. Place, David J.; Rep. Dawson, Matthew S.; Rep. Cruz, Cherie L.; Rep. Felix, Leonela; Rep. Hopkins, Marie A.; Rep. Noret, Thomas E.
Subject: Constituent Request - Please Oppose HB 8073

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Dear Chairman Craven and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

Dear Representative,

I am writing to respectfully urge you to oppose House Bill 8073.

As a Rhode Island resident and constituent, I am deeply concerned about the provisions in this bill that would prohibit the possession of certain semi-automatic firearms without a grandfather clause for law-abiding citizens who already legally own them.

Just last year, Rhode Island enacted legislation that bans the manufacture, sale, purchase, and transfer of certain firearms beginning July 1, 2026, while allowing lawful owners to keep firearms they already possessed. That compromise recognized the difference between regulating future sales and criminalizing individuals who followed the law when they acquired their property.

HB 8073 would go significantly further by making possession itself illegal. This would effectively turn many responsible Rhode Islanders into criminals for simply retaining firearms they purchased legally and in good faith under the laws that existed at the time.

I believe strongly that public safety is an important goal. I also recognize that the intent behind this legislation—to reduce gun violence—is admirable. However, legislation should not retroactively punish citizens who complied with the law. Removing grandfather protections undermines trust in the legislative process and creates serious concerns regarding fairness, property rights, and constitutional protections.

In addition, requiring law-abiding citizens to surrender legally acquired property raises serious constitutional concerns. The Fifth Amendment's Takings Clause prohibits the government from taking private property for public use without just compensation. Legislation that effectively requires citizens to relinquish lawfully purchased firearms without compensation raises important questions that deserve careful scrutiny.

Furthermore, recent Supreme Court decisions, including *District of Columbia v. Heller* and *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen*, have affirmed that the Second Amendment protects an individual right to keep and bear arms and that firearm regulations must be consistent with the nation's historical tradition of firearm regulation.

In addition, the Supreme Court has repeatedly recognized that firearms that are "in common use" by law-abiding citizens for lawful purposes receive constitutional protection. Semi-automatic firearms of the type addressed in HB 8073 are widely owned across the United States for lawful purposes such as self-defense, recreation, and sport shooting. Legislation that criminalizes possession of commonly owned firearms by otherwise law-abiding citizens raises substantial constitutional questions under this legal framework.

Rhode Island's own Constitution also recognizes the right of citizens to keep and bear arms. Legislation that criminalizes possession of firearms that were lawfully purchased by responsible citizens should therefore be approached with great caution.

Law-abiding gun owners in Rhode Island are not the source of violent crime, and policies that criminalize previously lawful possession risk targeting responsible citizens rather than addressing the root causes of violence. The reality is that individuals with criminal intent are unlikely to comply with laws requiring them to surrender firearms.

For example, consider the persistent problem of driving under the influence. The most recent data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) shows:

- About one-third of all traffic fatalities in Rhode Island involve drunk driving.
- Around 12 percent of total arrests in the state are related to DUI.
- Of children under 14 killed in traffic accidents, 25 percent were related to alcohol.

Rhode Island has strict DUI laws, yet those laws do not prevent irresponsible individuals and those with criminal intent from driving while impaired. The continued existence of these violations does not lead us to prohibit vehicle ownership entirely. Instead, enforcement focuses on those who misuse the privilege.

Similarly, inanimate objects themselves are not responsible for violent acts; responsibility lies with individuals who choose to misuse them. Laws that focus primarily on restricting objects rather than addressing criminal behavior risk missing the root causes of violence.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask that you oppose HB 8073 and any legislation that would criminalize the possession of legally owned firearms.

As your constituent, I would greatly appreciate understanding your position on HB 8073 and how you are evaluating the concerns raised by this legislation.

Thank you for your time and for your service to our community.

Sincerely,

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Best regards,

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