



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT

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Testimony Re: H5155 and H5345 Relating to Criminal Offenses
House Judiciary Committee
April 25, 2017
Kara Foley, Policy Analyst

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports H-5155 and H-5345, which are common sense measures to keep guns off school grounds and restrict the use of ammunition-feeding devices capable of holding more than ten rounds of ammunition.

Keep Guns Out of Schools

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports H-5345, which would provide that only peace officers and individuals approved by school officials for the purposes of educational instruction be permitted to carry firearms or other weapons on school grounds.

According to the national Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, Rhode Island is one of only 11 states that allow concealed carry permit holders to carry firearms in K-12 schools. We suspect that the many Rhode Island parents would be surprised and concerned to learn that their child's teacher can legally be carrying a firearm in the classroom. Teachers, principals, nurses, coaches, custodians, cafeteria workers, volunteers, parents, or anyone else with a permit to carry a concealed weapon can legally bring their gun on school grounds under current Rhode Island law.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is concerned that a weapon could be accidentally or intentionally accessed or fired by a student or teacher. Children and teenagers can be impulsive and unpredictable by nature and we think that the presence of guns in schools makes students less safe. We are not aware of any credible research that armed teachers enhance student safety. On the contrary, we think that the presence of guns in schools increases the likelihood that a tragedy could occur as the result of an accidental, intentional, or self-inflicted shooting.

For these reasons, we urge you to bring Rhode Island in line with our neighbors, Massachusetts and Connecticut, and most other states in the country and pass H-5345 to keep guns out of schools.

Ban High Capacity Magazines

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports H-5155, which would restrict the possession of ammunition-feeding devices capable of holding more than ten rounds of ammunition. As we saw in Tucson, Newtown, Aurora, Fort Hood, and other mass shootings, high-capacity magazines allow a shooter to fire repeatedly without pausing to reload. The time it takes a shooter to reload, even if it is only seconds, can allow victims to escape and law enforcement to

intervene. An analysis by Mayors Against Illegal Guns of mass shootings between January 2009 and January 2013 found that incidents where the shooter used an assault weapon or high-capacity magazine resulted in 123% more people shot and 54% more deaths than other mass shooting incidents.

We thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify today.

