



Testimony Re: S-2761, S-2835, and S-2730 Relating to Criminal Offenses

Senate Judiciary Committee

April 26, 2016

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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT strongly supports H-7243, H-7283, and H-7199, which are common sense measures to keep guns off school grounds, out of the hands of domestic violence perpetrators, 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 S-2761, 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 S-2761 to keep guns out of schools.

Keep Guns Out of the Hands of Domestic Violence Perpetrators

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports S-2730, a bill that would prohibit individuals convicted of domestic violence from possessing firearms.

In Rhode Island in 2013, there were 5,028 domestic violence incidents that resulted in arrests. Children were reported present during 40% (2,018) of these incidents. Cases of domestic violence are historically under-reported. Nationally, it is estimated that 41% of family violence incidents are not reported to the police. Similarly, Rhode Island data may

under-represent the number of domestic violence incidents witnessed by children because not all incidents are reported and children may be unwilling to admit that they witnessed the incident. Between 2006 and 2015, 19 Rhode Islanders lost their lives to domestic violence homicides as the result of firearms, according to a recent report by the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT believes that any individual who has committed a violent act towards a spouse or partner should not be allowed to legally carry a firearm. This bill will protect victims of abuse by restricting their abusers' access to guns and we urge your support.

Ban High Capacity Magazines

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports S-2835, 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.