



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT

ONE UNION STATION
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02903
401/351-9400 • 401/351-1758 (FAX)

**Testimony Re: House Bill 7764, An Act Relating to Criminal Offenses –
Weapons**

House Judiciary Committee

March 30, 2022

Kelsey Bala, Policy Analyst

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. We would also like to thank Representative Knight for sponsoring this important bill and Representatives McEntee, Caldwell, Cortvriend, Speakman, Donovan, Ranglin-Vassell, Kislak, McGaw, and Alzate for co-sponsoring. We would also like to thank Attorney General Neronha for his leadership on this issue. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its support for House Bill 7764 which would prohibit the purchase, ownership, carry, transport, or possession of a firearm by a person who has been convicted in Rhode Island or elsewhere of possession of a firearm without a license.

Preventing access to guns is an important measure in preventing firearm-related injuries and death in children and youth. In the U.S. during 2019, 60% (2,023) of the 3,390 firearm deaths of children and youth under age 20 were the result of homicide and 34% (1,167) were the result of suicide. In Rhode Island between 2015 and 2019, there were 145 emergency department visits, 31 hospitalizations, and 7 deaths of children and youth due to guns.

**Gun-Related Emergency Department (ED) Visits, Hospitalizations, and
Deaths Among Children and Youth, Rhode Island, 2015-2019**

| AGE | # OF ED VISITS | # OF HOSPITALIZATIONS | # OF DEATHS |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| 1 to 14 | 48 | 4 | 0 |
| 15 to 17 | 50 | 10 | 4 |
| 18 to 19 | 47 | 17 | 3 |
| TOTAL | 145 | 31 | 7 |

Source: Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, 2015-2019.

Nationally and in Rhode Island, gun reform remains a key area of focus, especially in the wake of tragic school and mass shootings in recent years. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT believes comprehensive state policies to reduce gun violence are needed, including prohibiting individuals convicted of violent crimes, offenses punishable as a felony, and those with prior convictions for possession of a firearm without a license from purchasing or possessing a firearm.

We strongly urge you to pass House Bill 7764, which would ensure those who have had prior convictions for possession of a firearm without a license would be prohibited from purchasing or possessing one. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.