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Written Testimony submitted to:

Committee on Public Safety and Security
Connecticut General Assembly
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Raised Bill No. 5158
An Act Concerning the Regulation of Firearms

I am writing to express concern about a provision in Section 10(a) of Raised Bill No. 5158 entitled "An Act Concerning the Regulation of Firearms". The objectionable provision is the deletion of the words "**at retail**" in the first sentence of C.G.S. 29-37a (line 394 of the raised bill).

The effect of the deletion of the "at retail" qualification would be to subject any transfer of rifles and shotguns between private individuals to the full reporting and administrative process imposed on firearms dealers.

I write on my own behalf as a citizen and an attorney. I am not a member of the NRA nor am I generally opposed to reasonable firearms regulation for the prevention of criminal behavior. I believe that, to date, Connecticut has struck a reasonable balance between measures to prevent firearms related crime and the rights of sportsmen and sportswomen, target and competition shooters and collectors. However, this proposed provision would significantly and adversely impact law abiding firearms owners without contributing in any meaningful way to crime prevention.

The proposed change would require that an application be filed before a gun owner could "transfer" a rifle or shotgun to any person, including to a child, parent, spouse or other related party or to a friend. Presumably, even the loan of a hunting rifle or shotgun to a family member or friend for use on a hunting excursion or for target shooting would require an application. A gift would likewise be subject to the same provisions. If the transferee did not have a hunting license or pistol permit, the two week waiting period would apply. In all cases, the transferee would be required to mail a record of the transfer to state and local officials within twenty-four hours. The individual making the transfer would be required to maintain the records for twenty years. In the event of the death of a lawful owner of a rifle or shotgun, would transfer procedures be required for the transfer of the firearms to the heirs?

There is scant, if any, evidence that these requirements would decrease crime. Most firearms related crime occurs with hand guns, for which application and reporting requirements, including for private transactions, already exist. Unfortunately, illegal acquisition of handguns by criminals is still too common and the private transaction permit requirement for handguns has had no measurable effect. Adequate laws exist and I urge the legislature and state police to increase enforcement efforts to combat illegal trafficking in firearms.

However, in view of the very small number of crimes committed with legally owned rifles and shotguns, the absence of any meaningful data which would establish any crime reduction benefit to the proposed requirements for private transactions, and the burden that would be imposed upon law abiding hunters, shooters and casual collectors, not to mention the administrative burden upon state and local agencies, this proposed requirement is completely unjustified.

The way the proposal has been inserted into this proposed bill suggests that the real motivation is to restrict lawful gun ownership, to develop what amounts to a system of registration of all firearms, or both. The fact that the official bill summary does not indicate that the proposed bill would severely restrict the private transfer of rifles and shotguns is inexplicable.

There are internal inconsistencies. For example, the statute requires that the state application be attached to the federal transfer document, but the federal document is only required for Federal Firearms Licensees. The statute requires that the application be available for inspection by law enforcement officials during normal business hours but, of course, individual transferors have no such hours. These are but two examples illustrating that the requirements of section 29-37a can not be made to reasonably apply to private sales and no attempt to do so should be made.

I urge the Committee to revise proposed Raised Bill No. 5158 by retaining the "at retail" limitation in Section 29-37a of the Connecticut General Statutes and omitting that change from Sec. 10 (a) of the proposed bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

Edward J. Rodriguez