February 27, 2020

Re: Proposed H.B. No. 5040, An Act Establishing an Excise Tax on Ammunition

Dear Elected Officials,

I’m writing to express my concern regarding the HB5040 proposal to excessively tax the public when purchasing ammunition. Stated simply, this “sin tax” will fail to resolve the issues contributing to present-day gun violence. This measure will merely shift already regulated sales beyond the reach of law enforcement, increase criminal activity, and disenfranchise Connecticut’s minority and economically disadvantaged residents.

I work as a New Haven county-based Firearm Safety Instructor. In the past five years I’ve assisted over 2,400 New Haven and Fairfield county gun owners. Each week students arrive almost singularly intent on Pistol Permit licensing and education for self-protection in the event of a violent encounter. We instruct in three critical areas. The first is how to select, introduce and safely secure handguns in a home or small business setting. The second is proper handgun use in the event of an attack. The third, is the all-important legal considerations for those carrying concealed in their everyday environments.

Here in Connecticut we enjoy an elevated standard of living compared with other regions. Yet there remain large segments of our population living at the lower economic spectrum. We see numbers of students who can best be characterized as living in more ethnically and economically disenfranchised settings.

Connecticut already imposes a burdensome licensing process and fees totaling $228.25 (or more) before someone is legally eligible to purchase a firearm or ammunition. This doesn’t include the cost of completing state mandated training programs. Taken together this often hinders individuals of more limited financial means. Not uncommon examples include single moms managing multiple jobs, difficult finances and living in less than desirable communities. Other common examples include couples aging in place together or seniors living alone on fixed incomes. All are equally united in their intent to avoid or otherwise protect themselves as best able from a criminal or encounter.

The federal government already levies an eleven percent tax when purchasing ammunition. The state imposes an additional 6.35 tax. Further taxation by 35 percent will only lead to three or more outcomes. The first is a reduction in recreational and shooting sport programs enjoyed by law-abiding citizens. The second is a disparate impact towards law-abiding gun owners among more socio, economic and ethnically marginalized communities. The third will be the unintended increase of illegal and unregulated ammunition sales. None of these or other possible outcomes will produce the firearm reduction actions sought.

I would instead appeal that legislators reexamine the failure in consistent enforcement of state firearm laws and continue much needed efforts towards addressing difficult mental health crises affecting our communities.

Daniel Bulkley
Milford, CT