25 February 2020

VIA EMAIL – fintestimony@cga.ct.gov

Re: Opposition to Proposed H.B. No. 5040

Dear Members of the Joint Committee on Finance, Revenue and Bonding:

Proposed H.B. No. 5040, An Act Establishing an Excise Tax on Ammunition (the “Bill”), is a truly unique combination of disingenuous, deceptive, and dangerous, and should be roundly opposed by everyone with a modicum of sense – a group which I pray includes members of the Committee.

The Bill is disingenuous on its face. It purports to generate revenue to fund gun violence prevention and reduction efforts, but cites no such efforts, and makes no attempt to limit the use of any funds generated by the proposed excise tax for such purpose. As any follower of recent road toll discussions knows, even a lockbox mechanism is generally insufficient to ensure that Connecticut uses revenues for their intended purpose. That Rep. Gilchrest makes no attempt to control the use of funds likely owes to the Bill’s deception.

The Bill is deceptive in that it purports to raise money for gun violence prevention and reduction, but in fact aims to restrict the ability of Connecticut residents to lawfully use firearms for sport. Shame on Rep. Gilchrest and her co-sponsors for lacking the courage of their convictions, however ignorant and misguided they may be. The Bill is a thinly veiled attempt to further restrict the very limited set of Second Amendment rights that remain to be enjoyed by Connecticut residents, and therein lies its danger.

The Bill is dangerous because it is a direct and unapologetic assault on the Constitutionally guaranteed rights of all Connecticut residents. It is a point-blank shot in the heart of freedom, and that should be concerning to any American, regardless of whether she chooses to exercise her Second Amendment rights. Rep. Gilchrest apparently played hooky from civics class. What makes the United States exceptional is not that it provides countless freedoms that are easy to protect, but that it provides countless freedoms that are extremely difficult to protect. Indeed, it is uniquely American to protect at great cost the rights of those whom we may oppose with every fiber of our being.

Rep. Gilchrest no doubt believes that a Connecticut town with 5,000 residents, 4,999 of which are Christian, must nevertheless respect the rights of its single non-Christian resident and avoid placing a nativity scene in the town square at Christmas time. How, then, would she square her naked attempt to legislatively force her personal views on gun ownership and use on the rest of Connecticut? How, indeed.

Once we take the lazy path of defending only those rights that we personally hold dear, we run the risk of finding ourselves in the minority in the next debate regarding freedom. This is the tyranny of the majority against which Alexis de Toqueville warned in America’s infancy. And so it is the obligation of every American, and the duty of its elected officials, sworn to uphold the Constitution, to defend the fundamental rights of all Americans, and not just those with whom they happen to agree in the moment.
Because at the end of the day, you are either American or you are not, and a vote for this Bill is an emphatic statement that you are not.

Sincerely,

Irina Comer
Norwalk, CT