February 21, 2020

RE: OPPOSITION to for H.B. No. H.B. 5040 AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN EXCISE TAX ON AMMUNITION.

TO: The members of the Finance Committee, (fintestimony@cga.ct.gov)

I am strongly opposed to the idea of adding additional takes on ammunition. I take exception to the purported purpose of this tax, as there is no evidence that any program developed so far to reduce violence has actually had the intended effect. These programs continue to recommend further restrictions on average law abiding gun owners, who are not the problem. Asking the people in the legitimate firearms community to fund these efforts is insulting.

Criminals and criminal activity in high density areas are the primary drivers of violence. This can be seen in any of the FBI’s statistical crime reports. Gang and drug related violence in large urban areas account for the lion’s share of violence, regardless of the method or tools employed. These individuals will not be deterred by funding yet another set of government ‘program’ that primarily infringes on honest citizens.

The numbers being thrown around about the ‘cost’ to the State of ‘firearms’ violence appear to be vaporous in nature. When challenged, the sources and methods used to produce the numbers are never made evident.

Monies collected by these types of taxes are frequently not used for the intended purpose, and end up just becoming a back door way to garner more taxes from specific citizen populations.

Finally, levying this major increase in the purchase price of ammunition will have several detrimental consequences. To state just a few:

- Poorer citizens will be unable to purchase ammunition for self-defense purposes, and will not be able to afford to engage in the training required to keep their perishable firearms skills current. As an aside, the single largest category of increase in Connecticut carry permit holders (as reported in 2019) is black women, many of whom are single moms.
- People of means who are mobile will simply go to adjoining states to purchase ammunition, thereby avoiding the current sales and excise taxes, as well as this new tax.
- I would think the example of the plastic bag debacle would be illustrative about how people react to unreasonable taxes. My understanding is the revenues expected from the 10 cent bag ‘tax’ are nowhere near what was projected.
- Local gun shops depend on ammunition sales to stay in business. Losing these sales may drive already borderline shops closer to closing, which will of course affect CT tax and licensing revenues. The final result will be to make it harder for citizens to exercise their rights to purchase and own firearms.

In summary, this additional tax is ill conceived, not warranted and will adversely affect the ability of Connecticut citizens to exercise the rights protected in the Federal and State constitutions. Poorer citizens will again more be the most heavily burdened by this tax.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide opposing testimony regarding this bill.

Respectfully,

William D. Curlew

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