25 February 2020

Written Testimony Opposing:
House Bill 5040, AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN EXCISE TAX ON AMMUNITION

My name is Anthony Dembek. I am a resident of Enfield, CT 06082. I sincerely urge you to reconsider the submission of this proposed statute. Enacting this bill simply adds to an already overburdened population who follow the existing onerous and multiple state and federal laws. There is no fiscal need to pile oppressive and useless taxes upon taxes.

The right to own a firearm, without infringements, is a right given to secure the Blessings of Liberty to each individual, as expressly stated in the Constitution of the United States and as affirmed by the United States Supreme Court. The Constitution of the State of Connecticut, Article 15, states, “Every citizen has a right to bear arms in defense of himself and the state.” However, owning a firearm in Connecticut requires navigating a hodgepodge of laws and crushing taxes. The maze begins with fees for training requirements, background check, fingerprint and state application fees. All of these taxes are arbitrarily set and changed at will, without notice. Also, in some localities, there are additional permissions and letters of approval requirements. After finally receiving a permit, the next morass is the firearm purchase paperwork of state and federal forms. There are sales taxes to be paid. Ammunition is taxed at point of sale. Most owners attend additional specialized training to become part of the safest, most able and informed enthusiasts in the nation. Additionally, many hobbyists challenge themselves in sanctioned competitions, regulated by such national and international groups as the
International Practical Shooting Confederation, the International Defensive Pistol Association, the United States Practical Shooting Association, the Single Action Shooting Society, and the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association. There are hundreds of re-enactment groups serving every curiosity and interest from the civil war to old west and modern practical training. Each and every organization has their own set of rules, requirements and supervision to ensure safety of every individual participating and those observing these contests.

As you can see, the legal, permitted firearm owner goes through these laws, testing, taxations, and training because they are dedicated to a sport they love while exercising their constitutional rights as free citizens of the United State of America and the Constitutional State of Connecticut.

The world will always have bad people who do not follow laws. Licensed and trained citizens in this state, and around the nation, are some of the warmest, most caring and dedicated people you will ever meet. For the majority, our God, our family and our nation are our top priorities. We believe in the rule of law and are faithful to our founding documents. Those who choose to ignore laws and taxes are totally unaffected by any additional fees, taxes, or other paperwork and training requirements. In short, this proposed bill will only affect and hurt legal, state-authorized, law abiding citizens who pay taxes and vote in elections. The criminal, crime rates, and quality of life of this state will be totally and absolutely unaffected. There is no data or evidence to prove otherwise. Conversely, there is overabundance of data to prove the exact opposite. According to Barack Obama’s CDC study on
firearms\textsuperscript{1}, firearms are used in crime 300,000 times a year in crime, but 500,000 to 3,000,000 times a year in lawful self defense. Law abiding gun owners are not the problem when it comes to violent crime. In fact, according to data provided by the Federal Bureau of Investigation for the first half of 2019\textsuperscript{2}, violent crime is continuing to trend downward, as it has for the past 40 years. Coincidentally, these same statistics show that in locations where more gun controls are enacted, the crime rate is much higher.

Why would we need more laws and regulations when there are hundreds already enacted? Law enforcement gallantly serves every day to administer law as written under very difficult conditions. Courts and the judicial system prosecute laws as interpreted. Sometimes this system doesn’t work as intended. Many laws are selectively prosecuted. Public safety, the stated reason for the laws in the first place, is jeopardized in the name of expediency. In 2007, candidate Barack Obama said, "We know what to do. We've got to enforce the gun laws that are on the books."\textsuperscript{3}

\textsuperscript{1}Priorities for Research to Reduce the Threat of Firearm-related Violence, \url{https://www.nap.edu/read/18319/chapter/1}
\textsuperscript{2}Crime in the United States, 2019, \url{https://www.nap.edu/read/18319/chapter/1}
\textsuperscript{3}2007 NAACP Presidential Primary Forum: on Gun Control, \url{https://www.ontheissues.org/Archive/2007_NAACP_Primary_Gun_Control.htm}