I am writing this testimony in regards to HB 5040 which proposes 35% excise tax on the sale of every cartridge of ammunition sold in the State of Connecticut.

I ask that the State please not move forward with any additional taxes on ammunition. The law-abiding firearms owners must already go through several costly steps to purchase our 2nd Amendment Right from the State. This includes classes, background checks, permits, and licenses which average an initial cost of $500 dollars. This cost alone is prohibitive to low-income and working families who wish to train, hunt, and protect themselves and their families.

This proposal is also harmful to our police, military who depend on our firearms for protection, and practice to remain proficient and safe with the use of firearms.

As a Soldier in the CT Army National Guard I train weekly, on my own time and at my expense, to ensure that I am an expert marksman. I only shoot once, maybe twice a year with the Army, with the exception of deployments and mobilization. This tax reduces the combat effectiveness of all Soldiers and Airmen in this State.

I too am opposed to gun violence and am abhorred by the criminal actions taken by a very small minority of unlawful users of firearms. I believe education is the best tool against ignorance. This is why I choose to educate myself, and my family on how to safely use firearms. This proposed tax creates a financial burden on the education of lawful gun owners. The most common cartridge used for firearms training is .22 long rifle. This ammunition typically costs $20 for a box of 500 cartridges with a sales tax of $1.27. If we apply the proposed 35% excise tax per cartridge to this purchase the lawful firearms owner will pay an additional $175 in tax.

This proposed tax will hurt small businesses in the State. Law abiding citizens will go to gun shops less to buy ammo because we simply can't afford it. This decrease in business will create a hardship for the owners and employees of these businesses, and their families.

Lastly, what is most hurtful to me, as a law-abiding legal gun owner is that this proposed tax punishes me. I love marksmanship. I shoot every week in the little free time I have for myself and it brings me great joy, and some time to ground myself, recharge, and reflect. This proposed tax punishes my pursuit of happiness and that hurts.

I'd like to propose some alternative options to this tax:
- increase fines on criminal behavior with firearms by 35%
- propose and create a “sin” fine bill that places increased fines on drug offenders, drunk drivers, and white collar criminals

I hope that you hear my views with an open mind and heart. I've tried to write them as unbiased as possible. Unfortunately I will not be able to attend the public hearing for this proposal as I will be on military orders for a couple weeks. Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,

Nathan D Fernace
Waterford, CT