Good afternoon committee members. My name is Kat Goulart, I live in New London, and I OPPOSE HB 5040. New London is one of the urban areas we so often hear is stricken by gun violence. Recently two blocks from my home there was a shooting at a convenience store. Two blocks in the other direction a young man was shot and and paralyzed. New London is no stranger to violence, as my House Rep, Anthony Nolan, will tell you. He works as an officer for the city’s police department. These crimes, and the multitude of others fueling this proposed tax, weren’t committed by the folks in this room today. They were committed by criminals. These same offenders who won’t show a permit of any sort to buy ammunition, and so won’t be participating in any way toward a fund to reduce gun violence. You’re asking law-abiding individuals to pay a grossly excessive tax to cover the cost of criminal activity. That’s no fairer than asking taxpayers to continue to bear the brunt, and akin to asking all licensed drivers to cover DUI classes.

The bulk of my professional career was spent as owner/operator of a bail bond company. During that time, I had extensive contact with clients accused and convicted of gun offenses. Federal judges routinely make offenders pay restitution into the Crime Victims Fund, established by the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) of 1984. It is within the authority of this body to create and enact such a program on a State level, and it is the only way to fairly fund the stated goal of this bill if this legislature does not intend to allow law enforcement to combat the issue. The fact that many of the same Democratic legislators who voted AGAINST Senator Sampson’s proposal to fund a firearms trafficking task force are the same legislators who voted to propel this bill forward tells us only one thing—the goal isn’t about safety or preserving life. It is about control. As a Latina living in a city, this concerns me.
Gun control policies have a disproportionate effect on minority communities. Every government hurdle placed on legal gun ownership leaves citizens more dependent upon the state for their own protection. In a study by the ACLU in 2014, available at ACLU-IL.org, it finds, in part:

“African American and Latino neighborhoods wait much longer for a police officer to be dispatched after an emergency 911 call, have fewer officers assigned to minority districts for each emergency call than predominantly white neighborhoods...”

A 35% tax is the very definition of a “hurdle placed on legal gun ownership.” This tax will be cost-prohibitive to many of the people you’re claiming to want to help. People like me-- low-income minorities who live in cities. We are already making really difficult choices with limited incomes, and often healthcare and other basic needs suffer. A 35% tax on ammunition amounts to nothing more than taxing us out of a right afforded to us by the U.S. and Connecticut constitutions. This bill sends the racist and classist message that some life is worth more than others, depending on financial ability to pay an exorbitant tax. My life is not worth less.

I do not support this bill, nor will I support any legislator who votes it forward. Oppose HB 5040.

Kat Goulart, New London