February 24, 2020

Committee on Finance, Revenue, and Bonding
Legislative Office Building
300 Capitol Avenue, Room 2E
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: Oppose HB 5040 AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN EXCISE TAX ON AMMUNITION

Dear Honorable Members of Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee:

I am writing this letter to express my opposition to HB 5040. If passed into law, the bill establishes a 35% ammunition tax to fund gun violence prevention. While I agree that the legislation is an infringement of our Second Amendment rights, I’m not going to get into the Gun Control versus gun rights debate; the research indicates that neither stance has strong arguments for their respective sides. Because of the weakness of the state’s case, it cannot pass Constitutional muster.

Gun violence, as are other crimes, is a complex issue, and naturally, the solution is complex. A primarily ignored theory is the relationship between economic performance and crime rates. When looking at financial performance, it tends to rectify the variances in gun violence rates regardless of the presence or absence of gun control laws. The idea being that a thriving economy brings resources | it brings capital, employment opportunities, and access to health care. The two essential resources being employment and health care, more employment opportunities in the legitimate job market, reduce the likelihood of turning to the illegitimate economy. History shows that an illegal economy increases violent crime, especially violent crime. For proof, look at the spike in violent crime during the prohibition era!

If this committee, and the entire legislative body, is serious about combating the gun violence epidemic, the focus should be on repairing the CT economy. Connecticut is facing a mass exodus of its citizens and businesses, which in turn further harm the economy. The crisis is so bad that a Facebook group exists (“People who have left CT or who are leaving”) to assist people with finding more significant opportunities in other states. Class mobility is practically non-existent due to stagnated wages. Unemployment is increasing as employers leave to obtain a more business-friendly environment. The CT budget requires significant reform, which starts with eliminating wasteful spending; major tax reform needs to focus on reducing the tax burden that is on the businesses and the citizens.

Sincerely,

Joseph R. Lauria