To: Members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee

From: David Mayer, West Hartford, CT

Re: In support of H.B. 5040

Date: February 25, 2020

Dear Chairs and Distinguished Members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee,

My name is Stacey Mayer and I am a resident of West Hartford. I am writing in support of H.B. 5040, An Act Establishing an Excise Tax on Ammunition. I support this bill because there are vital intervention programs operating in Connecticut’s cities and neighborhoods hit hardest by gun violence, but they need sustained, reliable funding in order to stop shootings. A reasonable tax on ammunition would generate funding that could go towards resourcing these evidence-based programs and make our communities safer.

The aim of this bill is very simple: to generate revenue that will go directly to the groups that are actively engaged in gun violence prevention efforts, especially in Connecticut’s cities. The costs associated with gun violence, including the costs of law enforcement, criminal justice, and health care, greatly outweigh the cost of investing in evidence-based preventative programs. Gun violence costs Connecticut $1.2 billion a year. National estimates suggest that averting a single gun homicide saves taxpayers an average of $464,000. Of course, these tangible costs do not capture the pain of losing a loved one, or the trauma young people carry with them for the rest of their lives after witnessing a shooting or living in fear of becoming a victim of violence themselves. The programs that fight against gun violence, however, struggle to maintain funding; the revenue captured by H.B. 5040 would help alleviate this shortfall.

Furthermore, the groups that this bill would fund have shown great success, and are making a difference and reducing gun violence across the state. For example, Project Longevity is one of the organizations that would receive funding raised by H.B. 5040; this is an organization that operates in the three cities that experience the majority of firearm homicides and assaults in our state (New Haven, Bridgeport & Hartford), and has repeatedly demonstrated success through the Group Violence Intervention model. Project Longevity launched in New Haven in 2012 and in Hartford and Bridgeport in 2013. Project Longevity’s work has contributed to a 53% reduction in Connecticut’s gun homicide rate from 2012 to 2018. In 2017, New Haven saw its lowest number of homicides in decades, representing a nearly 80% decrease since 2011. This decrease was attributed in part to Project Longevity’s work. All of these numbers translate into lives saved.


Unfortunately, funding for Project Longevity has been inconsistent, and that has hampered its ability to carry out its work. The statistics show that as funding increases for these types of programs, the number of homicides is reduced. Conversely, as funding is reduced, the number of homicides increases. H.B. 5040 will provide critical financial support for Project Longevity and other organizations that are working so hard to end gun violence in Connecticut.

We know that the gun violence epidemic in this country knows no boundaries, and reaches all communities and all people. We also know that this is a plague that affects our cities and communities of color at a much higher rate. If we, as a state, are serious about fighting gun violence, we must invest in the organizations that are on the front lines of this fight. H.B. 5040 will allow us to do just that.

Please support H.B. 5040. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,

David Mayer
West Hartford, CT