Honorable members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee,

I am writing in opposition to HB 5040, An Act Establishing an Excise Tax on Ammunition.

I find this proposal offensive on multiple levels. I would like to explain why.

I am politically unaffiliated, liberal in many ways, and this is not a form letter urged on by anyone.

I find the notion of this tax...

1.) REPREHENSIBLE IN THAT IT TARGETS A CIVIL RIGHT.

This tax is directly comparable to the ugly history of Poll Taxes in the Civil Rights movement...financial penalties by the government to dissuade lawful behavior that it wishes to repress. Given gun control’s frequent historical association with racism, and disarming African-Americans, it’s not even a stretch to make the comparison.

There is little trust between gun control advocates and gun owners, and this bill could be Exhibit A, if we weren’t already on Exhibit ZZZZ. The motivation behind it is so clearly not to prevent anything, or increase education, but to discourage legal gun use/ownership and raise revenue by targeting a political expedient bloc of the “other side.”

Government entities do not currently lack the funding to conduct gun "buybacks."

On the gun education side, there are countless gun education and safety curricula available already to anyone who wants them. The NRA’s is the gold standard and actually used for the state licensing process. However, I’m sure that isn’t going to be suggested as one of the funded efforts from this tax, nor would, say, classes for children in the safe handling of firearms.

Nor support for high school rifle teams, which once dotted the state and yet did not lead to horrific tragedies, but rather taught safe handling, discipline, and responsibility.

2.) UNNECESSARILY BURDENSOME TO A SPECIFIC POPULATION.

In addition to sales tax on ammunition and supplies, shooters already pay numerous and increasing fees to get the paperwork to be able to carry and purchase firearms to exercise their 2nd Amendment rights. Imagine for a moment we did this to literally any other element of the Bill of Rights.

This tax also especially impacts youth shooting sports, which are increasingly dominated by girls.

For high school competition rifle, a brick of top-quality ammunition can easily cost $200. Are we really suggesting with a straight face it be $270?

And given that competition rifle is a female-dominated sport, one of the few where men and women compete equally, are you really seeking to be the party that taxes a girls-dominant sport higher? The NCAA rifle championship was an all-female team last year, the record is held by a
woman, and the competition shooting community is well used to female coaches and role models in the sport.

Youth sports aside, hunters pay conservation and other fees. While not related to shooting, fishermen pay special fees in Connecticut based on the kind of fish they want to catch!

Outdoor sportsmen and women pay, pay, pay.

3.) IMPRACTICAL.

New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine are short drives. If this law passes, out of principle, people will no longer buy ammunition in Connecticut. It’s that simple.

I should point out that homicides with firearms are generally committed by young criminals who do not acquire their firearms and ammunition legally. Mass shooters are not going to have a tax stop them. For a tax that is supposed to reduce violence, it targets precisely the people least likely to commit violence.

4.) ILL-DEFINED.

As I am sure you know, a similar 50% tax was proposed last year. It wasn’t defined then either what these funds would be used for, and when that was defeated, now it’s back, but 35%. I guess the 50% level wasn’t really needed last year. Can we please just admit this is not some well-developed plan to make a meaningful dent in anything, but rather a punitive move to target a particular demographic with a slowly reductive negotiating strategy?

I’d call it all Machiavellian, but that implies a degree of cleverness.

5.) OBNOXIOUS.

Enough. Enough of the laws that unfairly target people who do not commit crimes with firearms. Enough with the unfair and politically motivated targeting. Enough with a thin veneer of faux policy to “do something” just simply disguising a punitive tax.

Proposals like this are a great example why I am leaving Connecticut at retirement. The state is telling me it does not want my kind--my volunteering, lawful citizen, taxpaying kind--around. Fine by me.

We have so much common ground. I do not want people murdered any more than you do, by people with guns or anything else.

I do not want people, especially children, to accidentally die from gunshots.

I do not want people to take their own life, with a gun or anything.
I do not want guns in the hands of criminals.

It pains me that a legal, fun, civically minded activity is being vilified and targeted by my own government.

This proposal is wrong on literally every level, and I urge you to not support it.

Sincerely,
John Sponauer
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