To the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, 
The Connecticut General Assembly, 
And all residents of the state of Connecticut-

I write to oppose H.B. 05040, AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN EXCISE TAX ON AMMUNITION, on the grounds that it will unjustly burden firearms owners regardless of income, directs money away from the taxed group’s interests, and is intended to reduce or eliminate firearms ownership with policy that rivals that of the Jim Crow era’s Poll Tax.

The irrational nature of this bill is clear from the start with the focus on a heavily regulated group of individuals as the funding source and the astronomically high value of the tax. Connecticut requires that individuals acquire one of three permits (for ammo, long guns, or handguns) that require at minimum a state background check and at most, additional authorization by a local police chiefs, 8+ hours of class, and a federal background check. These people are not those who are committing the violent gun crimes cited as a reasoning for this bill and they are already strapped with the significant costs of licensing ($100+travel/time off from work) and wait times that regularly exceed 10 weeks to merely acquire a permit. This bill too starts at the exorbitant tax rate of 35% that dwarfs many existing excise taxes such as alcohol and gasoline. There appears to be no initial rational to this number nor a funding need within the existing state framework. No other remedies have been suggested for funding these “programs” nor have previous bills sought to fund them until now.

The programs that are supposed to be funded by the revenue from the excise task appear to be vaguely described as those combating gun violence and do not directly reflect the issues facing the communities being taxed. Firearms owners face specific types of gun violence, being suicides and self inflicted injuries. The programs mentioned appear focused on cities and firearms assaults/homicides instead of suicides and safe storage of firearms. Violence in urban centers can include suicides but differs greatly from the dispersed often stress and mental illness related violence firearms owners are more likely to experience and inflict (on themselves). Focusing on these issues as well as others such as long wait times for permits that go well beyond the 8 week deadline in law and access to safe and affordable facilities to improve one's marksmanship would be a more appropriate goal that could create a self sustaining series of programs that capitalize on the needs of those paying the tax.

Lastly, this bill is the newest in a series of efforts that continue to grossly disincentivize firearms ownership in the state. Previously, Governor Malloy proposed an increase in the handgun licensing fee to $300 from $70 in 2017 that was out of line with most surrounding states’ rates. Prior to this, the creation of the Long Gun Eligibility Certificate added significant burdens to acquire firearms that are primarily used for hunting and overwhelmingly used in little to no murders each year (1-2 murders are committed with long guns per year in Connecticut of the ~80 total, based on FBI uniform crime statistics). Grossly increasing the cost of ammunitions, regardless of the type from recreational target shotgun shells to personal defense handgun ammunition, disincentivises buying these products across the board. As stated in section 15 of the Connecticut state constitution, “every citizen has a right to bear arms in defense of himself and the state”. The people of Connecticut are entitled to bear arms, defend themselves, and by extension, be well trained. This seeks to prevent all three. This is not a revenue issue. This is not a fiance issue. This is not a bonding issue. This is a supposed issue on firearms and their...
usage that is being dealt with through a roundabout manner to meet a politician's personal agenda. Poll Taxes and literacy tests were used to prevent people in this country from exercising their rights to vote throughout its history. Today, we are seeing new modern practices by both political parties to prevent people from exercising more of their rights they do not like. This is a prime example.

I am a young graduate of the University of Connecticut who chose to stay in this state. I am not a radical. I am not an outsider. I am not “an older individual stuck in the past”. I work in the growing research sector of the state, I volunteer to improve and protect the waterways we are fortunate to have here, and I hope to spend a lifetime in the Nutmeg state. Legislation like this makes me question this path and staying in this state.

I hope the legislation seriously considers the ramifications of this bill and does not support it.

Sincerely,

Christopher Zins
Norwalk, Connecticut
University of Connecticut Class of 2018