

# Judiciary Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-7194

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING SELF-DEFENSE.

**Vote Date:** 4/7/2025

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/12/2025

**File No.:** 752

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## SPONSORS OF BILL:

Judiciary Committee

## CO-SPONSORS:

Rep. Donna Veach, 30th Dist.

Rep. Bob Godfrey, 110th Dist.

## REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill is intended to amend existing statutes governing the discharge of a firearm near a residential property to clarify that for purposes of self-defense, such an action isn't prohibited by those regulations. It's also intended to allow for the transfer of large capacity magazines (LCM) and assault weapons between two individuals who are legally allowed to own them, since state law currently prohibits this type of transfer.

## SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language removes the third and fourth sections of the bill regarding large capacity magazines and assault weapons, while keeping the first and second sections with wording modifications for clarification purposes.

## RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

**Patrick Griffin, Chief States Attorney, Division of Criminal Justice:** They testified in opposition to this bill, though they take no position of the addition of subsection (b). They are in support of Line 3 of the proposed bill/The Division is not in favor of the proposed removal of "intentionally" from the existing unlawful discharge of firearms statute as there appears to be no logical reason for doing so. By removing the word "intentionally" there is no need for

the proposed subsection (b) on lines 8-10. This legislative body would be making a change which would be making an exception for mental state which no longer would be in statute. They recommend that the word "intentionally" remain as one of the mental states set forth in subsection (a).

**Ronnell A. Higgins, Commissioner, Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection:**

They testified that they have concerns regarding this bill. The Special Licensing and Firearms Unit (SLFU) highlighted many practical aspects of the agency that could track transfers of magazines. As magazines are not serialized or uniquely marked in anyway, it would be difficult to track the transfers of the magazines. Records would need to be updated twice, requiring additional resources and staff, which is not in the Governor's budget. The bill does not specify what the agency would need to do when tracking the transfers when magazines come from another state, as there are states that do not regulate high-capacity magazines. Individuals may unintentionally violate our state's firearm laws. They also want to highlight the original ban on high-capacity magazines, which allowed residents to keep any in their possession at the time of passage twelve years ago. Allowing the trading of high-capacity magazines would in effect restart the market and increase the availability of them.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**Charles Baugh, CCDL Member:** They testified in support of this bill. Citizens who are allowed to purchase firearms and large capacity magazines should be allowed to transfer any weapon or accessory. No one should have to retreat and should be able to defend themselves anywhere. This is a second amendment right and it shall not be infringed.

**Stephen Bennett:** They testified in support of this bill. It clarifies when a person can discharge a weapon for self-defense or lawful defense of another person. Bans of assault weapons and large capacity magazines is a violation of several Supreme Court decisions. Legal transfer of assault weapons and large capacity magazines should be allowed if done between two persons legally permitted to possess such items.

**Robert Blouin, MD:** They testified in support of this bill. No one should be charged for discharging a firearm in self-defense or when saving lives. This is not logical, and you are punishing the law-abiding citizen.

**Jonathan Hardy, CCDL Pistol Permit Specialist, Firearms Instructor and Salesperson at the Gun Store, Waterbury, CT:** They testified in support of this bill. This bill is violation of the latest Bruen decision decided by the Supreme Court. These limitations only impact honest citizens. The large capacity that are being banned are standard magazines and are common with each firearm. People try to turn in magazines, and we cannot take them at our store.

**Christopher Kalkreuth:** They testified in support of this bill. In an unfortunate incident, every gunowner is responsible for how they conduct themselves. This bill codifies that when legally deemed self-defense, the discharge of a firearm is not unlawful. It is not illogical to allow the transfer of firearms and magazines when it is amongst people who are legally allowed to possess them.

**Walt Kupson, Outreach Coordinator, Connecticut Citizens Defense League:** They testified in support of this bill. The first section of this bill that removes the possibility of being charged if the firearm is being discharged in self-defense. This is common sense. It has been proven time and time again that people who legally acquire and possess a firearm are rarely involved in crimes with that firearm. It is practical that the transfer of large capacity magazines and assault weapons between those who are registered and declare LCMs and Aws be allowed. Connecticut's ban on large capacity magazine ban and assault weapon ban is already unconstitutional.

**Michele McBrien, Owner, PatriotWare Holsters, LLC:** They testified in support of this bill. They have found that the banning of assault weapons can hinder the transfer to someone besides the person who initially purchased the assault weapon. There have been instances where this law has caused issues if the people who registered the assault weapon are found medically unsound, have moved to a nursing home or care facility, and can no longer possess a firearm and/or magazines. By allowing only one transfer, if the assault weapon is transferred to an FFL that counts as the one transfer allowed and it cannot be passed to another loved one or to the designated person. They were not allowed to receive a firearm from her grandfather's estate due to this law and this is only one example. FFLs cannot transfer the firearm unless it is done out of state. They cannot help citizens to legally transfer the firearms to the very people they want.

**Tyson Nason:** They testified in support of this bill. This is the necessary step toward restoring fundamental rights for law-abiding citizens while ensuring responsible regulations of firearm ownership in Connecticut. This bill will strengthen the right to self-defense, allow for the fair and lawful transfer of firearms and magazines, and it will take a balanced approach by restoring fairness and respecting Constitutional rights.

**Mark Hansen:** They testified in support of this bill. This will remove the possibility of being charged with "unlawful discharge of a firearm" in a legitimate self-defense situation. A person who lawfully owns an assault weapon should be able to sell or transfer them to another good citizen without the worry of the government confiscating them. An item that a person lawfully possesses should not be confiscated. They believe that any weapon can be an assault weapon and the terms are disgusting.

**Walter Kelly:** They strongly support this bill. This bill protects the rights of law-abiding citizens and allows them to exercise their constitutional freedoms responsibly. When a threat can at any time emerge, this bill empowers citizens to feel secure without fear of legal repercussions, it is common sense and is a Second Amendment right. Law-abiding citizens should be allowed to inherit, sell, or acquire large capacity magazines and assault weapons. This will allow those who follow the rules to not be unnecessarily hindered. HB7194 sends the message that Connecticut lawmakers respect and value individual people and trust their constituents; he said it is refreshing to see a policy which allows freedom and fairness. Please stand for the rights of Connecticut residents and Second Amendment freedoms.

**William Schnell:** They testified in support of this bill. They believe the first section of the bill, which removes the possibility of being charged for discharging a weapon in self-defense, is common sense. Transfer of assault weapons and large capacity magazines should be allowed when it is done legally between anyone who legally can own firearms. The ban on

large capacity magazines and assault weapons is unconstitutional, according to the 2022 Bruen Decision.

**Trevor Vaughn Hauck:** They testified in support of this bill. The bill clarifies the critical issue of self-defense and the ability to transfer assault weapons and large capacity magazines among legal gunowners. It is a 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment right and it should not be infringed on. By supporting this bill, the state will take a crucial step in restoring and protecting the rights of gunowners who have been unfairly restricted under current law.

**Kurt Weisheit:** They testified in support of this bill. This legislation is crucial in upholding the fundamental right to self-defense while addressing the transfer of large capacity magazines between those who legally possess such items. It is important to note that the vast majority of gunowners are law-abiding citizens. This bill makes some progress; however, it does not sufficiently protect our Second Amendment rights which create a safer society. This bill strikes balance between the right to self-defense and addressing the concerns surrounding the transfer of large capacity magazines.

**Other Testimony:** Due to the quantity of testimony received for this bill it is not possible to give a summary of each individual submission. Of the remaining testimonies in support, the following ideas were expressed:

**105** solely expressed support for this bill.

**19** expressed that they believe that a person should not be charged with "unlawful discharge of a firearm" if there was a legitimate self-defense situation.

**26** testified lawful gunowners should be able to transfer large capacity magazines to other lawful gunowners.

**57** mentioned that large capacity magazines and assault weapons should be able to be transferred to another law-abiding person without fear of having it confiscated and citizens should be allowed to use their firearms in self-defense or defense of someone else.

**5** testified that it was their Constitutional right to own and bear arms. They also have a right to own and transfer ownership of assault weapons and large capacity magazines, something decided by the Bruen Decision in 2022 by the Supreme Court.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Stacey Mayer:** They testified in opposition to this bill. Allowing firearms to be discharged for the broad purpose of self-defense could lead to unnecessary shootings when less forceful methods could have been used. What constitutes "lawful" self-defense is open to subjective interpretation and could lead to an escalation of a conflict. Allowing the easy transfer of LCMs creates the possibility of re-establishing a market in Connecticut amongst the class of pre-existing LCM owners. The state laws help keep track of LCMs and this bill would undermine that purpose.

**Jane Doyle, MD, CT Against Gun Violence:** They testified in opposition to this bill as they believe normalizing self-defense has the potential to escalate a conflict. As we read in the

news, innocent people become frightened gun owners and then they shoot someone who comes to the door, often done without cause. She believes this bill could cause needless deaths.

**Jonathan Perloe:** They testified in opposition to this bill. Even though we have more guns than people, we have higher rates of gun violence than any nation on the planet. The sanctity of life should be respected in a house of worship. Stand your ground laws increase homicides, which is the opposite of what supporters claim. Civilians that are armed are not trained for active shooter situations and it is rare for an armed civilian to stop an active shooter. They believe that this bill increases the risk of gun violence and that the law regarding LCMs should not be loosened. Given the current administration in the White House, the CT General Assembly must be vigilant about protecting and strengthening firearm regulations.

**Karen Edwards, Retired pediatrician:** They testified in opposition to this bill. Allowing the transfer of LCMs to be easy will weaken the existing laws designed to track them.

**Amy Ford Keohane:** They testified in opposition to this bill. They urge the Committee to vote in opposition to this bill to keep residents in Connecticut safe.

**Irene Skrybailo:** They testified in opposition to this bill. Large capacity magazines have no other purpose except to kill and kill on a mass scale; they are not safe to use in self-defense unless you want mass casualties. They believe that LCMs should be tracked; they are dangerous and should not be in the civilian market.

**Catherine Weaver:** They testified in opposition of this bill. This bill would remove the ability to track large capacity magazines. This is the first step in undermining Connecticut's efforts to track the large capacity magazines.

**Other Testimony:** Due to the quantity of testimony received for this bill, it is not possible to give a summary of each individual submission. Of the remaining testimonies in support, the following was expressed:

**19** solely opposed this bill.

**Reported by:** Bonnie Gray

**Date:** April 24, 2025