February 24, 2021

RE: House Bill 175; Unlawful Discriminatory Practices

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Massey and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation (CSF), I respectfully encourage you to support House Bill 175 which would make discriminatory policies and practices by financial institutions and government entities against the firearms industry illegal. Firearms and firearms-related businesses are essential to supporting Kentucky’s hunters and recreational shooters, and we believe the legislation is needed to protect Kentucky’s sporting heritage and the conservation funding and economic benefits that sportsmen and women provide to the Commonwealth.

Since 1989, CSF has maintained a singleness of purpose that has guided the organization to become one of the most respected and trusted sportsmen’s organization in the political arena. CSF’s mission is to work with Congress, governors, and state legislatures to protect and advance hunting, angling, recreational shooting, and trapping. CSF has a strong track record in Kentucky, working with conservation partners to protect and advance Kentucky’s sporting heritage by supporting pro-sportsmen’s legislation and state fish and wildlife management objectives. We offer the following comments based on our experience working on hunting and recreational shooting issues for more than 30 years.

Financial discrimination against the firearms and ammunition industry negatively impacts Kentucky businesses and their hunter and recreational shooter customers. To state the obvious, firearms, ammunition, firearm accessories, and shooting ranges, as well as hunting-related products that are manufactured, distributed, or sold by firearms-related businesses, are essential for hunting and recreational shooting. Without protection under the law to engage in the commerce of these goods free from discrimination by financial institutions and government entities, Kentucky’s sporting heritage is jeopardized.

We would like to note that the legislation does not contravene the freedom to contract. Financial institutions and government entities are not mandated to do business with a firearms-related business;
they may refuse to work with a firearms-related business due to a directive from a regulator or for any business reason that is not a discriminatory policy against the firearms industry.

Sportsmen and women are the primary funders of state-based conservation and contribute significantly to Kentucky’s economy. In 2019 alone, Kentucky’s sportsmen and women contributed $47.16 million to conservation funding generated through hunting and fishing licenses and excise taxes on sporting-related goods, the “user-pays, public-benefits” structure known as the American System of Conservation Funding. The excise taxes on firearms and ammunition, via the Wildlife Restoration Act (Pittman-Robertson), generate the vast majority of revenue. Additionally, Kentucky’s 713,000 sportsmen and women have a significant economic impact spending more than $1.9 billion, supporting more than 35,000 jobs, and generating more than $167 million and state and local taxes in the commonwealth.

In closing, House Bill 175 would ensure that firearms and firearms-related businesses would not be discriminated against in business dealings without consequence, and we respectfully encourage you to support the legislation.

Sincerely,

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