

March 29th, 2023

Chair Ormsby and Members of the House Appropriations Committee,

The undersigned nonprofit organizations, representing the interests of hundreds of thousands of hunters and anglers in Washington, have concerns with Senate Bill 5078 (SB 5078), which would impose liability on sellers of firearms for criminal misuse of the firearm by third parties.

Nonprofit organizations, including organizations listed below, are dependent on donations to fund our charitable missions that provide important conservation and habitat improvements for fish and wildlife throughout Washington. Many of these funds are generated through volunteer-run auctions and banquets, where firearms and other items generate important revenue for our work.

Firearms provided at these charitable fundraising events go through the same federal and state requirements for background checks, relevant waiting periods and/or training requirement verification as any firearm sold at a store. SB 5078 threatens these efforts by imposing liability on the non-profit organizations conducting these charitable fundraising activities without providing clear instructions on the appropriate “reasonable controls” that organizations need to follow to protect against potential liabilities.

Further clarification is also needed for lawful retailers of hunting equipment so they can continue to provide Washington’s sportsmen and women with the equipment they need to get outside and enjoy the great outdoors. SB 5078 will discourage charitable organizations and hunting equipment retailers from providing firearms, even if they follow all legal requirements, which will result in fewer hunters entering the sport and therefore, less funding for conservation. The Pittman-Robertson Act of 1937 created a source of funding for fish and wildlife habitat conservation through a 10-11% federal excise tax on the sale of firearms and ammunition. Combined with hunting licenses and stamp fees generated by hunters, these funds go directly to on-the-ground conservation projects. Without these critical funds, many of Washington’s fish and wildlife species will be in danger.

We respectfully request your help to protect nonprofit charitable fundraising activities. Without clear instructions on how organizations can comply with new liability requirements, non-profit organizations and conservation funding will be negatively impacted. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important bill.

Sincerely,

Keely Hopkins
Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation

Matt Little
Ducks Unlimited

Dale Magart
Northeast Washington Wildlife Group

Alex Baier
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Chris Tymeson
Safari Club International

Russ McDonald
Washington State Chapter- National Wild Turkey Federation