

**Delaware House of Representatives**

**Rep. Valerie Longhurst**

**For Immediate Release:**

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**House Passes Longhurst Gun Safety Bill Prohibiting Sale, Manufacture, Possession of Assault-Style Weapons**

DOVER – In the wake of two horrific mass shootings last month, the House passed landmark legislation that would effectively prohibit the buying, selling and possession of assault-style weapons in Delaware.

On May 24, an 18-year-old legally purchased a military-style semi-automatic rifle and used it days later to murder 19 elementary school students and two teachers in Uvalde, Texas. Earlier in May, an 18-year-old used a legally purchased semi-automatic rifle to kill 10 people at a supermarket in Buffalo, N.Y.

Last week, House and Senate Democratic leaders and Governor Carney announced a historic package of bills to address issues these and other issues surrounding firearm safety.

Sponsored by **House Majority Leader Valerie Longhurst**, House Bill 450 would prohibit the manufacture, sale, offer to sell, transfer, purchase, receipt, possession, or transport of assault-style weapons in Delaware, according to a legal definition. The prohibition would include popular firearms such as AK-47s, AR-15s, UZIs and similar weapons.

The legislation would grandfather existing weapons and protect their owners from being misidentified as lawbreakers while placing restrictions on the transportation and use of those weapons.

“The intention of this legislation is simple and clear: To make sure the next Uvalde, the next Buffalo, the next Sandy Hook, does not take place in the state of Delaware. It’s to make sure that, in Delaware, it is against the law to obtain the kind of weapons that can inflict this level of carnage and devastation – highly lethal weapons with their origins in the field of military combat, which have ended up in our schools and shopping malls,” said **Rep. Longhurst**, D-Bear. “The shooter at Robb Elementary school had an AR-15 style semi-automatic rifle. The shooters in Buffalo, El Paso, Parkland, Las Vegas, and Sandy Hook were also armed with semi-automatic assault-style weapons that would be prohibited by this bill.

“HB 450 is one piece of a puzzle that we have been working to put together for the last several years. We have worked to address mental health in our schools and communities; we’ve enacted Red Flag laws to identify those who should not be allowed to obtain weapons; we’ve dedicated millions of dollars to making our school buildings safer and more secure; and we’ve worked to reduce the heinous lethality of the firearms in our state by banning bump stocks and other devices. I’m grateful to my colleagues for taking this bold step forward today and look forward to it becoming law.”

Assault weapons have been used in the seven deadliest mass shootings in the last decade. An analysis of public mass shootings resulting in four or more deaths found that more than 85% of such fatalities were caused by assault rifles. An assailant with an assault rifle is able to hurt and kill twice the number of people compared to an assailant with a non-assault rifle or handgun.

Under the Delaware Lethal Firearms Safety Act of 2022, prohibited weapons would include specific assault long guns and pistols as spelled out in the bill, as well as “copycat” firearms. Copycats include a semi-automatic centerfire rifle, a semi-automatic shotgun that has a folding stock, or a shotgun with a revolving cylinder.

“It seems as if after every tragic mass shooting, there is an outcry from residents asking elected leaders to stand up and do something. And while Delaware has stepped up multiple times, we must continue to answer that call from our constituents,” said **Sen. Nicole Poore**, the lead Senate sponsor of HB 450. “The vast majority of Americans and Delawareans support common-sense gun safety measures that will protect the lives of our children, neighbors and friends. Discontinuing the sale of assault-style weapons will help reduce the proliferation of these firearms and could help prevent the next mass shooting from happening in our state.”

HB 450 would not prohibit the possession and transport of firearms that were lawfully possessed or fully applied for before the bill becomes law, with certain restrictions. There would be exceptions for law-enforcement and military personnel in the course of their official duties, and a limited exception for retired law-enforcement personnel. A person lawfully in possession of an assault weapon prior to the passage of HB 450 could lawfully transfer the weapon to their immediate family member, through inheritance or otherwise.

Additionally, the Department of Safety and Homeland Security would be required to develop a procedure for issuance of a voluntary certificate of possession to show lawful possession of an assault weapon prior to the bill becoming law. A gun owner would not be required to apply for the certificate. The department would not be permitted to retain copies of issued certificates or identifying information of any applicant.

In addition to this bill, lawmakers have announced plans to raise the age from 18 to 21 to purchase most firearms, limit high-capacity magazines, strengthen background checks, hold gun manufacturers and dealers liable for reckless or negligent actions, and ban the use of devices that convert handguns into fully automatic weapons.

HB 450 now heads to the Senate for consideration.

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