

February 10, 2018

To the Kansas Committee on Federal and State Affairs:

My name is Darren Canady and I'm writing to express my deep opposition to core portions of HB 2042 entitled "Concealed carry licensure amendments under the personal and family protection act." While on the bill's surface it may appear to be a strengthening or increase of regulations or rules governing the carrying of firearms on Kansas college and university campuses, it actually represents a loosening of that access. This loosening not only undercuts one of the core arguments/promises used to allay the fears of campus carry opponents (more on this in a moment), but it is also a dangerous increase in access to firearms by students who are still trying to navigate the emotional and psychological difficulties of transitioning in to higher education.

I am submitting this opposition testimony as a private citizen representing only myself, but my concerns here are based on my experiences as a professor at the University of Kansas. First, as mentioned above, this bill represents a disingenuous refutation of one of the most oft-quoted defenses of the original Personal and Family Protection Act given to those of us who opposed concealed carry on campus. When we raised our statistics- and data-based concerns about the safety of young adults having access to guns in our workplaces and teaching environments, we were told that we had very little to worry about because the ability to conceal carry would only affect those twenty-one-years-old and older, that meant a large percentage of students did not meet this requirement and therefore the bill only, in fact, affected a limited group of the student populace. This argument was aired in two congressional meetings I attended, two campus informational sessions I watched, and three panel discussions in which I participated. At the time, a number of us plainly stated our fear that the Personal and Family Protection Act may only affect over-twenty-year-olds at its inception, but it represented a fateful step to much wider access to firearms. We were called alarmist. We were told we were stoking unreasonable agitation.

HB 2042 is *exactly* the legislation we were told we would not need to worry about.

HB 2042 is *exactly* what we predicted would be the next step.

By allowing eighteen-year-olds to carry on campus with Kansas permits or a permit from another state, this law will effectively throw open the doors to guns in our higher education learning environments, workplaces, and student living facilities. While it may appear at first that this legislation is actually raising hurdles to campus concealed carry, we must always bear in mind that Kansas is part of a volatile vanguard of states who have decreased (if not eliminated altogether) the safety precautions and measures put in place to make sure gun owners are responsible, trained citizens who know how to safely operate their firearms and keep them from falling in to unsafe hands.

I am asking the committee members to bear in mind that our nation is still trying to come to grips with the continued, regularized occurrence of mass shootings in a number of environments – both public and private. Also, please realize that burgeoning adults – those in the age group directly affected by HR 2042 – are actually biologically predisposed to slower, more reckless decision making because their brains are still forming and developing those skills.

While there are scientific studies that support this fact, my own experiences this week alone have stoked my concerns. A graduate student I advise was going about the business of classroom instruction had a student psychologically unspool during class. The student began mumbling and questioning his instructor and classmates about people that were after him and had secret information about him. He took over the whiteboard in the room and began scrawling things about vast conspiracies meant to destroy him. Most jarringly, he suggested that he would need to defend himself against his instructor and classmates. Clearly, the student was having a psycho-emotional episode. What concerns me is this 1) this is not the first time an incident like this has happened to an advisee or colleague of mine (i.e. young people with psychological instability are a reality of higher education), and 2) there is nothing that would have prevented this young man (who was in a predominantly first-year and thus eighteen-year-old class) from obtaining a permit under the new regulations.

For the reasons cited above, I urge you to vote against HB 2042.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Regards,

Darren M. Canady