

Senate State, Veterans, & Military Affairs

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HB22-1086 The Vote Without Fear Act

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Alexa Browning For March For Our Lives	<p>Testimony Supporting HB1086 March 15, 2022</p> <p>Chair Coleman and Committee Members,</p> <p>My name is Alexa Browning and I am a Policy Associate at March For Our Lives, a courageous youth-led movement dedicated to promoting civic engagement, education, and direct action by youth to eliminate the epidemic of gun violence, and I am here to speak on why we are in support of HB 1086.</p> <p>About a month ago, on the anniversary of the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, March For Our Lives volunteers from Colorado testified in the House State, Veterans, & Military Affairs Committee in support of this bill. Today, I'm submitting this written testimony to continue showing March For Our Lives' support of the bill. Young people across the country are tired of living in fear of gun violence. Gun violence prevention legislation like HB 1086 saves lives, and is what millions of young people came together to march in support of after the tragedy at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.</p> <p>According to New Era Colorado, about 70% of registered 18- to 34-year-old Coloradans cast ballots in the 2020 election, a 9 percentage point increase from 2016, when turnout was 61%. It's clear that young people are energized about the democratic process; the polls should not be yet another place where young people have to worry about gun violence. Polling places should be a place where all Coloradans should feel safe and free to cast their vote.</p> <p>I urge you to support this bill. Thank you.</p>
Toby Davidow For Self	<p>I am urging the passage of this important bill. Voting MUST be free of any threats!! What more does one need to know! As a life long voter - an elderly one at that - it is unconscionable that a gun a definite threat - be considered!</p> <p>Thank you for doing the right thing.</p> <p>Toby Davidow</p>
Carolyn Shepherd For	<p>I would like to offer testimony in support of HB-22-1086, the Vote without Fear Bill and I urge the committee to approve this bill to make</p>

Self	<p>the civic act of voting safe. Last July after camping in the Canyons of the Ancients, I went to the City Market in Cortez, Colorado. There was a woman, entering the store with an exposed firearm on each hip and no mask. She became agitated when she was asked to wear a mask by a person collecting the shopping carts. The presence of the firearms clearly made this a dangerous situation and many potential customers turned away from the entry to the store and left in their cars. My husband and I did the same.</p> <p>My right to vote is guaranteed in our state constitution. The presence of open carry firearms is intimidating. The same intimidation that occurred at City Market will happen for folks when they approach a voting place if there are others with firearms. We need to keep our voting places safe for voters, election officials and poll workers.</p> <p>In addition, in our polarized society the display of firearms at a voting place would reflect a form of electioneering which is not allowed in any other circumstance. We have had representatives campaign while packing firearms on each hip. In Colorado today, one group would see open carry as an affirmative political statement, the other side would feel this is an attempt to intimidate them to prevent their voting.</p> <p>Finally, gun violence happens where guns are present. The local evening news is full of stories of intentional and accidental shootings. Coloradoans should not experience fear or danger when fulfilling their civic responsibilities to participate in democratic elections. I hope the committee will vote to support HB-22-1086, the Vote without Fear Bill. Thank you.</p>
Jeanne Bucci For Self	<p>Testimony in support of HB22-1086, the Vote Without Fear Act</p> <p>Chair Coleman and Members of the Committee,</p> <p>Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony today. My name is Jeanne Bucci and I am writing in support of HB22-1086, the Vote Without Fear Act, which prohibits the open carry of firearms within 100 feet of voting and election sites.</p> <p>Free and fair elections are the foundation of a healthy democracy. Voter intimidation and voter suppression are completely unacceptable in a democracy.</p> <p>All Coloradans should be able to exercise their fundamental right to vote freely and safely-without fear for their safety at a polling place or drop box.</p> <p>Openly carried firearms at polling places or drop boxes will intimidate, threaten and coerce voters, infringing upon their ability to exercise their</p>

	<p>voting rights, and thus leading to voter suppression. This bill seeks to ensure that every Coloradan, regardless of where they live, has a safe environment in which to cast their ballot.</p> <p>If I were to see someone openly carrying a firearm, I would be terrified because I do not know what is in that person's mind. That person could begin shooting at any moment. And I would not want to stick around to find out. But I have a constitutional right to cast my vote. No one should have to risk their life to cast their vote in a democracy!</p> <p>Election officials, poll workers and election judges deserve to know they will be safe while they work. We need honest, capable people with integrity to do these very important jobs. But why would anyone step up to do these jobs if they are afraid they will be shot? The poll worker does not have the option of just leaving if they were to see someone arrive with an openly carried firearm. They should no be forced to work under the threat of deadly violence.</p> <p>For all these reasons, I am urging you to support HB22-1086, the Vote Without Fear Act.</p> <p>Thank you, Jeanne Bucci</p>
<p>Terrence Lovett For Self</p>	<p>We seem to be reliving many of the mistakes of the past. As a Gen-Xer, I was present for much of the review and exploration of history in our culture during my formative years. I remember discussions of the Gold Rush, the Great Depression, Wars of the late 1800s, the Robber Barons, Banking Reforms, Housing Reforms, Voting Protections and so much more. I was hopeful of our future as a nation believing that the USA learns from its past unlike many other nations.</p> <p>Since 2001, I am not so sure that is true anymore. I am suspicious that there are wealthy people who long for times of great abuse of the poor and corruption in power so they are not held accountable. I am starting to think the political parties are gripped with greed and hard-heartedness. I feel like we are losing and I believe that comes from our failures to learn from history. And our propensity to repeat it. We have become like the royals of Europe who gloried in endless wars and destroyed generations of youth.</p> <p>As a person born in the South, we believed our white counterparts to be possessed and oppressed of the demonic. They seemed ill-fated toward anger, murder and violence. They could not help themselves. So we learned to not blame them directly. There was some other force pushing them towards fear, hate and violence. We learned to deal with that force. We learned to look past what we could see and learn more.</p>

	<p>It is wise to make a law restraining weapons at voting polls. It learns from past intimidation tactics of the KKK and other white supremacists. However beware, the police are often influenced by the same forces as those who submit to Hate. You should assign a specially trained security group to this work. If you don't this effort may backfire on you allowing fear mongering groups to cause a great riot or battle which the police can't or won't handle competently and still get the desired outcome that the hatemongers want. Which is inspiring fear to keep people away from the voting polls. Don't fall into this trap. Go further, look beyond what you can see. Be strategic, and learn from the past.</p> <p>A special security force can plan, deter, reroute and scatter those seeking to inspire fear. The police too often rely on fear themselves. They won't be effective in fighting it. Please, pass this law but go further so that fear mongers and terrorists don't win.</p>
<p>Jessica Price For Moms Demand Action for Gun Safety in America</p>	<p>Hello, my name is Jessica Price. I am a lifelong resident of Aurora Colorado and I have been the leader of the Aurora Moms Demand Action group for several years. Moms Demand Action is a gun violence prevention group consisting of volunteers from across the US working to pass common sense gun laws. I am here to support House Bill 22-1086, The Voting Without Fear Bill.</p> <p>Along with my role as a Moms Demand Action volunteer, I am a mom of three kids and a full time high school social studies teacher at Overland High School in Aurora. For the past 23 years, I have had the pleasure of teaching US government and civics to young people. You know as legislators, that the most important part of our democracy is voting. We teach this to kids as soon as they enter school at the age of 5 and we continue to encourage active citizenship throughout their entire educational careers. I teach my students that it is not only their right to vote, but it is their civic duty.</p> <p>However, my students are growing up in a time where they are distrustful of the government, distrustful of the system that has let them down so many times and they are scared everyday of being killed at school, at the movies or at the grocery store. They have the right to feel safe everywhere they go, but they especially should feel safe when they turn 18 and vote for the first time. I should feel safe taking my young children with me when I turn in my ballot. My 73 year old mother who has never missed voting in an election in 55 years should feel safe when she votes.</p> <p>Openly carried firearms at polling places or drop boxes may intimidate, threaten, or coerce voters, affecting Coloradan's ability to exercise their voting rights. This bill seeks to ensure that every Coloradan, regardless of where they live, has a safe environment in which to cast their ballot. I have always been proud to tell my students that Colorado has some of the most accessible voting laws in the country, but it is missing this one. Currently, no federal law exists to prohibit the open carry of firearms at polling places. Thus, it is up to the General Assembly to take action to ensure our drop boxes and polling centers are free of intimidation.</p>

	Please pass this bill so that I can keep encouraging my students to vote knowing that we have made it as safe as possible for them to do so.
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Hello committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My name is Kathy Hagen, and I am a proud member of Moms Demand Action, a grassroots organization with more than 8 million supporters fighting for public safety measures that can protect people from gun violence.

I am speaking today in support of HB22-1086, Voting without Fear.

When I was young, I remember my parents taking me with them to vote. I was intrigued by the little booths with curtains, and my parents showing me how the voting machine worked. We were not a particularly political family, but my parents repeatedly stressed the importance of voting in every election. When I reached 18 and was finally able to vote, I remember the pride I felt after I turned in my ballot. I still feel that way now when I drop my ballot in a drop box.

The thing that does feel different now, however, is the level of anger, distrust in our voting system, and vitriol that accompanies our elections. The elevated temperature in the country around politics feels explosive. Add more guns, social media, far right extremism, desperation, and misinformation to the mix, and the risk of violence feels palpable.

In a Virginia school board meeting, a mom said she would bring her guns “loaded and ready” if a mask mandate wasn’t lifted. In Littleton in 2020, two men were arrested intimidating voters at a drop box—they were filming the voters, and one had a gun openly displayed.

We have a state law that prohibits voters from wearing any paraphernalia—buttons, hats, shirts—that support or oppose a candidate within 100 feet of a polling place. Why do we not have an explicit law prohibiting openly carrying a firearm within 100 feet of a polling place? A gun definitely sends the voters a message and seems much more persuasive than a button or hat!

In Colorado, we have one of the most accessible voting systems in the country. For that, we should be proud. We must ensure that accessibility is not hindered by a few who want to intimidate citizens from exercising their right to vote. We need to send a clear message that openly carrying a firearm near a polling place is not allowed. Please pass this bill out of committee.

Thank you.