

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter to voice my concern over HB 16-1204 and HB 1179. As a teacher, veteran, and gun owner, I believe I should have a voice in legislation that might affect my life. Both bills seem to be written out of an ill-guided desire to increase gun presence in public places. Although I understand people's fears and concerns over public safety, increasing the presence of firearms in public places may not be a viable solution.

As a teacher, I am very familiar with school security. To permit firearms in schools only adds to a school's security concerns. School resource officers and staff would have to be more diligent about who is lawful and who is simply taking advantage of this new law if it were to pass. Additionally, school buildings present many obstacles to anyone thinking they could protect themselves and others with the use of firearms. Police undergo hours of training in order to prepare themselves for active shooter scenarios. Would you trust someone using a firearm in a school building without that training? What's more, the thought of teachers, parents, and staff carrying firearms would only add to increasing student anxiety perpetuated by constant safety drills and media coverage. In the end, schools are safer when people follow safety protocols as outlined by law enforcement and school administration. Allowing firearms in schools would only complicate the problems and concerns school districts are trying to address through rational and pragmatic methods. If school safety is a concern, pass a bill that increases law enforcement presence both in and around schools.

As a veteran who served four years in the Army and another four years in the Colorado National Guard, I can tell you that most of my weapons training dealt with combat scenarios. Although I have the greatest respect for all our active-duty service men and women, it does not mean that I feel they have the training needed to exempt them from conceal carry laws. First of all, the military has very strict rules preventing their sailors, soldiers, and marines from having firearms in their living quarters. Exempting active-duty servicemen from the conceal carry laws would contradict military policy, especially for those soldiers required to live in military housing (i.e. barracks or dorms). Furthermore, this exemption assumes that all military members have extensive weapons training. I can assure you that a good portion of military positions involve very little experience with small fire arms. Will this house bill give somebody that has spent most of their military service behind a desk or working in a hospital the right to conceal carry? Does that seem wise? Also, what about the numerous mental health issues many of our military service members are dealing with from a decade of war?

My biggest concern with both bills is that they seem more politically driven than rational. Both bills fail to address school and military culture, and they make assumptions that citizens will be safer without any evidence-based research.

Sincerely,

Samuel Wardell