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Testimony in Opposition to HB 2326 – Concealed Carry Reciprocity
House Fed & State Affairs Committee, Rep. John Barker, chair
March 12, 2019

Mr. Chair, members of the Committee:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today. My name is Rabbi Moti Rieber, and I am executive director of Kansas Interfaith Action, a statewide, multi-faith issue-advocacy organization that “puts faith into action” by educating, engaging and advocating on behalf of people of faith and the public regarding critical social and economic justice issues.

One of KIFA’s key issues is that of gun violence. The people of faith who make up KIFA support strong gun legislation that would address the plague of gun violence that besets our country. We have been before this committee many times in the past, attempting – mostly unsuccessfully, unfortunately -- to stop this committee’s, and this legislature’s, determination to do away with virtually any law that would limit access to firearms, who could own them, the training required, what kinds of guns can be owned, and where they can be carried. The results we have long predicted – that more guns will equal more gun violence, more guns used in domestic abuse, and more suicides – are indeed coming to pass.

The pastors I work with hold this issue very closely, because they are the ones who have to sit with families after a suicide, after an accident, after a shooting in a school, bar or parking lot.

Every denomination KIFA works with closely has made numerous public statements in support of what we call “gunsense” legislation. To save the committee’s time I will only share one quote, but I could share literally a dozen. This is from the Presbyterian Church USA:

It is clear that our voices have not been persuasive in themselves and our actions too limited to stem the tide of gun violence. There are too many places in America where it is difficult to hear [God’s word] over the persistent retort of gunfire. We continue to be convinced that God calls us to protect the lives of all within the human community, as each is loved by our Creator. In order to be faithful to our vocation to seek God’s shalom, we need to seek new and active ways of effectively bringing life-saving change. We can no longer tolerate such a preventable exile from God’s peaceable kingdom or reign.

We believe this bill will have the effect of lowering the concealed carry age to 18 – if not in the bill itself, then as an amendment on the floor, or next year we’ll all be here again next year under the logic that if

18-year-olds from other states can carry why can't Kansans? This is how a slippery slope works: first you change the rules, then all further changes seem logical. We don't think 18-year-olds should have an unfettered right to concealed carry, therefore we oppose this bill, whether the specific 18-year-old carry provision is in this version or not.

There is an epidemic of gun violence in this country. The way to begin to stem the damage is with sensible gun legislation, such as these bills:

- HB2111 - Requirements for the sale of firearms at gun shows or over the internet.
- HB2129 - Creating the gun safety red flag act.
- HB2234 - Creating the voluntary gun safe act.

All of which are in this committee, and none of which have had a hearing. This bill, though, the one that keeps doubling down on the disastrous gun policy of the last 10 years, this bill gets a hearing.

I have no illusions that this committee will listen to these words, any more than you have listened to similar words the last half-dozen times I've said them. Thoughts and prayers are common; effect action, not so much. But the time to turn back the tide is now. Vote no on 2326, and give a hearing to these other bills, which will actually begin to address the problem of rampant gun violence, instead of exacerbating it.

Thank you for your attention.