

Date of Testimony: Feb. 10, 2018
Bill Number: Bill HB2042
Testimony BY: Jessica M. Geesaman

In Opposition

Testimony: Written Only

Dear Chairman Bud Estes and the members of the Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs:

I am writing to voice my opposition to Concealed Carry bill, HB2042.

Lowering the age from 21 to 18 for concealed carry is a terrible idea - it puts at risk members of my community that I care so much about. Teen mental health issues are rising at unprecedented rates, and so allowing for concealed carry among younger and younger members of society in this fragmented/disturbed age will surely lead to more school shooting incidents. Teen mental health issues do not magically resolve once one turns 18.

I am originally from Colorado, and moved to Johnson County, KS a year ago for my husband's job. On April 20, 1999, I was in 8th grade at a private middle school in Littleton - 5 minutes away from Columbine. I will never forget my school being on lockdown, the helicopters flying overhead, fears that there were more gunmen - so little was known and less was understood about school shootings, who the perpetrators were or what they wanted. I will never forget the terror and shattering heartbreak that ricocheted throughout the community as the death count was revealed and it was understood that this was a murdering rampage committed by students against classmates. My friend Emily's mother was a librarian at Columbine (remember the library was a scene of carnage and several student deaths) - she was not there for one reason - she went home to feed the family's new puppy, inadvertently avoiding the gunmen's massacre. In April 1999, I was 13 years old, and watching (on the news) but also in my neighborhood that people so close in age to me would choose to murder their classmates as some type of revenge for bullying was absolutely shattering to my sense of safety, my sense of justice, my sense that people in the world are generally good. It is hard to put into words how much this event happening in my backyard shook me - I had nightmares about it for years.

Yes, this incident I recount was committed by disturbed adolescents below the age of 18 who did not have a concealed carry permit, or any gun permits of any kind - but what disturbs me is that since 1999, increases in teen mental health issues & depression are "huge—possibly unprecedented," says Jean Twenge, a professor of psychology at San Diego State University," (TIME, October 17, 2017 <http://time.com/4974863/kids-smartphones-depression/>)

According to TIME magazine, "Between 2010 and 2016, the number of adolescents who experienced at least one major depressive episode **leapt by 60%**, according to a nationwide survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. **The 2016 survey of 17,000 kids found that about 13% of them had a major depressive episode, compared to 8% of the kids surveyed in 2010. Suicide deaths among people age 10 to 19 have also risen sharply**, according to the latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention," (TIME, October 2017 <http://time.com/4974863/kids-smartphones-depression/>).

These demographic statistics are disturbing and reason enough to re-think lowering the age for concealed carry permits - mental health issues do not magically disappear once one turns 18.

I ask that you oppose HB2042. Lowering the age of concealed carry to 18 is too great a risk for our young people, our families, and our communities.

Thank you for your consideration,
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