

Proponent Testimony
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S.B. 235
March 23, 2017

Chairwoman McGinn and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 235.

My name is Rick Johnson and I am the Chief of Police at the University of Kansas Medical Center. I also serve as the Chief Security Officer for The University of Kansas Health System. I have been responsible for the security of The University of Kansas Hospital staff, patients and visitors for the past 33 years.

Allowing the carrying of concealed handguns in a healthcare environment will not increase security. It will create new public safety threats.

My position is practical, not political. I am absolutely convinced that firearms do not enhance hospital security but will contradict many of the best practices already in place.

The University of Kansas Health System is unique in many ways. Police and security services are provided by a nationally recognized and accredited police department, the University of Kansas Medical Center (KUMC) police. During 2015, The KUMC Police Department responded to priority calls with an average response time of 90 seconds.

Concealed carry will add dangerous complexity to highly chaotic and emotional situations. For example, our police officers will lose critical time trying to determine which person with a firearm is the threat and which person is a citizen drawing a gun in a life-threatening situation.

As the only hospital in the Kansas City area facing the prospect of allowing firearms – or screening hundreds of patients and visitors every day at metal detectors – I fear what this could mean for patients, visitors and staff.

Everything from accidental discharges or misuses of firearms to bullets not hitting their intended targets concerns me. The presence of oxygen and other medical gases presents an additional level of danger.

Theft of a weapon is another significant risk, especially when a weapon falls into the wrong hands.

We serve hundreds of patients each day who are extremely vulnerable and totally rely on staff to protect them from harm. The presence of firearms makes these patients less safe.

Other states that have passed concealed carry legislation, such as Texas, have recognized the unique challenges of the healthcare setting and have exempted public affiliated hospitals from concealed weapons.

My job is not only to keep the hospital safe from real threats, but to make staff and patients feel safe. The prospect of July 1 and concealed carry in my hospital complicates our proven best practices in security.

I strongly encourage the members of the Kansas Legislature to pass this bill and allow a permanent exception to this section of the concealed carry law.