

Today, I would like to testify in favor of Senate Bill 2797. In particular, the addendum that pertains to schools is an important one to me. I have been in education for 25 years and have been a school principal and administrator for 12 years. Our biggest initiative has been to teach students how to be safe, kind, and responsible. As educators, we know that when kids feel safe, they can achieve more. Unfortunately, I have had to suspend or expel students for bringing weapons to school ranging from small pocket -knives to guns. In every case, the student with the weapon made another individual feel unsafe. Currently, guns are banned in schools but there is an exemption for adults who have concealed handgun licenses. Basically, there is a different standard for adults and our students under 21 years of age. I can tell you that adults with guns make people in schools feel equally unsafe.

When I was an elementary principal, students would find or steal candy, toys, and money from teachers' purses or drawers. How they even knew that particular items were hidden away was beyond me, but somehow they had a knack for figuring these things out. I fear that the same thing would happen with guns. It would take but one time for a student to get their hands on a gun and there would be a horrible mishap and consequently, a public outcry. In my current position as director of alternative schools, I work with secondary students who are considered "at-risk." They need structure and clear boundaries. The idea that some people can bring guns to school and others can't is a difficult rule to understand. I can guarantee you that if they think that someone is bringing a gun to school, even legally, they will bring a gun illegally because they will not understand where the line is drawn.

As an educator, safety is paramount to the school experience. Precautions are in place should a dangerous person come on campus. I would ask that guns not be allowed on school property under any circumstance. Thank you, in advance, for understanding the importance of the passage of Senate Bill 2797.

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