



Date: April 28, 2011
To: Senate Judiciary Committee, Chair Prozanski and Members
From: Laurie Wimmer, OEA Government Relations Consultant
RE: *Dash 1 amendments to HB 2797 [Banning weapons in Schools]*

On behalf of OEA's 45,000 members, it is my honor to speak in favor of the dash 1 amendments to HB 2797, which would give educators and law enforcement personnel another tool to help keep schools safer.

We believe that HB 2797's amendment strikes just the right balance between an individual's right to possess weapons and a school district's need to keep staff and students safe from violence in schools. We know that, overall, school is the safest place for children from a statistical point of view, but occasionally violence does erupt on school premises. Too many of our young people have been harmed as a result. We know that schools and colleges are not appropriate places for carrying, discharging, or otherwise making use of any kind of weapon.

Just as airports, courthouses, and other public spaces are becoming safe havens, we think schools and campuses should be as well. Our thanks go to policymakers who back this amendment to keep our students and education staff safer by making possession or discharge of a weapon in school or on school grounds a class C felony.

Two provisions in this amendment make this a particularly well-thought-out legislative concept: first, that no person otherwise allowed to possess a firearm will be inconvenienced by this safety measure, because s/he would still be allowed to have an unloaded weapon locked in his/her vehicle on school property. Second, because discovered weapons would be subject to confiscation, crimes and tragedies will be preventable because pre-emptive action will be allowed.

For all these reasons, OEA supports this amendment and thanks this committee in advance for amending the bill and sending it to the Senate floor with a do-pass recommendation.