

Thank you to the chairman and committee for allowing me to speak and hearing my testimony. My name is Crystal D. Hays. I am submitting this testimony in opposition to bill HB2059.

In August of 2016, my youngest sister NaTasha Hays was shot and killed while she slept in her home. Leaving my family, including her three teenaged children, devastated and struggling to deal with the loss. That was my first experience with personal gun violence. Almost a year to the day in August of 2017, my 17 year old son Le'Andrew Vaughn and my 16 year old nephew Adarius Barber, was shot and killed while sitting in a car in front of a friends house after a day of shopping for shoes, preparing for the upcoming school year. Le'Andrew, an aspiring baseball player/engineer, would have been entering his senior year of high school. These two young men did not live a "high-risk" lifestyle. They are good students, even better athletes, sons, brothers, uncles, cousins, nephews, grandsons, and friends. What is suspected by law enforcement, these acts were committed by underaged youths. Since 2016, my family and I have had repeated experiences with incidents of gun violence that has impacted our lives. For me, another nephew, a cousin, and a friend.

HB2059; would lower the age limit, allowing a teenager to carry hidden and loaded firearms in public. Statistics show that incidents of gun violence, including suicides and unintentional shootings are committed by individuals under the age of 18 (eighteen) years of age. Lowering the age limit will increase the number of such incidents and acts; giving teenagers an increased opportunity to commit, contemplate, and involve themselves in incidents and crimes involving firearms. Teenagers who may not possess the mental capacity to understand and/or realize the adverse effect or impact of their decision to use a firearm to resolve a conflict. Teenagers who may not have been taught or possess effective conflict resolution or problem solving skills. A teenager, even without the ability to carry a firearm, who is already statistically more impulsive. Teenagers who may not possess the ability to think rationally in an intense and heightened situation. Teenagers who can not purchase tobacco and/or alcoholic products; which have warning labels applied. A teenager who, already, may be struggling with thoughts of insecurity, worthlessness, a lower sense of self-esteem, and isolation.

As community leaders, community activists, advocates, and lawmakers, we can not continue to contribute to the delinquency of our minor children by arming them with tools that may have a negative, adverse effect of their futures; while we continue to take away the necessities that has shown time and time again to be effective in their success. We, as leaders, can not continue to contribute to the devaluatization of human life.