

January 26, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to oppose House Bill 2059, Providing reciprocity for licenses to carry concealed handguns and creating two classes of concealed carry licenses. I am a teacher and Kansas resident, a concerned citizen. I have watched with horror as gun violence in our country -- homicides and suicides -- have increased exponentially over my lifetime. I am concerned about this trend and believe that more regulations should occur instead of fewer.

First, suicide has surprisingly increased in the last decade. As a teacher, it seems so very tragic that the cases of which we hear the most about are students. This, in and of itself, is horrific. It is easy to make a quick decision when a firearm is available. However, America's high suicide rate is driven mostly by a single demographic group: rural white men. This should be concerning to those of you who are making state wide decisions about gun control because our great state has a large population of rural communities. We are not immune.

Second, it looks as though you are proposing an age change for those eligible for gun licenses. The chance that someone will die a violent death at the hands of another person is ten times higher in the United States than any other country in the world. Guns were built into the fabric of early America, but this access was historically coupled with heavy gun regulation. Adding more people, particularly young people whose frontal lobes -- that decision making part of the brain -- are not fully developed, is moving in the wrong direction. In fact, on the heels of the Violent Crime and Law Enforcement Act (1994) which included a ban on semiautomatic "assault rifles", none of the worst mass shootings in history occurred during the ten years following. Coupling a loosening of restrictions with a lower age requirement for provisional license is dangerous.

In conclusion, there are multiple reasons we should be restricting gun access instead of loosening it. We do not want the United States, and, in turn, rural communities in Kansas to be

first in this arena. We need to be looking for ways to curb violence instead of increasing it. Allowing younger citizens to access guns in America's agricultural heartland is a mistake.

Yours Truly,

Laura Wiltanger

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