

Thank you Chairman, Vice Chair and to the committee for hearing my testimony today.

My name is Amanda Winch. I am a lifelong Kansan who grew up in Wichita, KS and now reside in Overland Park, KS with my family. I am a parent of 2 young boys, an alumna of Kansas State University and I am also the volunteer Kansas Chapter Leader of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. We are a nonpartisan, grassroots gun violence prevention organization, dedicated to advancing policies that respect the Second Amendment and protect our communities from gun violence. I became involved with Moms Demand Action over 4 years ago because, as a new mother, I thought it was important to raise awareness about gun safety and felt that no parent should have to endure losing a child in such a senseless way.

On behalf of the thousands of Moms Demand Action supporters in the state of Kansas, we oppose HB 2059. It is a dangerous piece of legislation which would further rollback gun laws in our state and allow 18-20 year olds to carry hidden, loaded handguns in public.

Back in 2017, as a Moms Demand Action volunteer, I recall advocating for public universities to receive a permanent exemption from the Personal and Family Protection Act - a law which allows citizens ages 21 and over to carry concealed handguns into public buildings on university campuses. Despite our efforts, that law went into effect in July of that year. At the time, we were reassured by those refusing to offer a permanent exemption that this law would not have far reaching impact as most college students are under the age of 21; however by the next session we were talking about lowering the age to conceal carry to 18 and here we are talking about it again today.

For perspective, the University of Kansas reports that almost 60% of their undergraduate students are under the age of 21[1]. As you can see from this number, passage of HB 2059 would expand the population of

those allowed to carry hidden, loaded handguns on public university grounds substantially.

It's also important to note that 18-20-year-olds commit gun homicides at a rate nearly four times higher than adults 21 and older[2]. Furthermore, we are at the height of a pandemic. The Journal of the American Medical Association said COVID-19 makes a perfect mental health storm, with added stress and anxiety, and the potential for less emotional support [3]. Additionally, this last November, the city of Wichita reported amidst the COVID-19 pandemic that suicide attempts by firearm were up 150% [4]. And last June the CDC reported that people aged 18-24 were more than twice as likely, at a rate of 1 in 4, to have seriously contemplated suicide than those in other age brackets [5].

We strongly urge you to join us in the effort to keep our Kansas communities, and especially our young people, safe by rejecting HB 2059 and upholding common sense safety laws in KS.

Thank you.

Amanda Winch
Kansas Moms Demand Action
Volunteer Chapter Leader

Sources:

[1]<https://concealedcarry.ku.edu/>

[2]<https://everytown.org/solutions/prohibitors/>

[3]<https://www.kmbc.com/article/mental-health-experts-concerned-pandemic-could-lead-to-more-suicide-attempts/32259874>

[4]<https://www.kansas.com/news/local/article246817197.html>

[5]https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6932a1.htm?s_cid=mm6932a1_w