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LD 885

Dear Members of the Education Committee,

I am a retired Maine school teacher with over 28 years of experience and I am a mother and grandmother. We absolutely should not allow guns in our schools even in the hands of concealed weapons permit holders. There are many reasons why this is a bad idea which I would like to point out.

1) Getting a concealed weapons permit is not that difficult. Although some individuals may go to the shooting range to practice this does not qualify them to know what to do in a real active shooter situation. My husband is in law enforcement. Not only does he wear a bullet proof vest, he has hours of scenario training. These individuals have no training in assessing the danger or in implementing a plan of action and they, in their unexperienced state, would be around children, with a loaded weapon. In an active shooter situation how are law enforcement supposed to differentiate between them and the active shooter?

2) We don't know the mental state or stress that any of these individuals may be under. Just a few months ago there was a mass shooting in Lewiston. The shooter had been in the military and likely would have met the qualifications to obtain a concealed weapon permit. We do not need a potential mass shooter to be bringing a weapon into our schools.

3) We have children in our schools with emotional and behavior health issues. An outsider with a concealed weapon has no way to know if these behaviors are dangerous. The risk to one of our students with special needs is too great.

4) Parental consent. Some parents simply don't want their children around guns. When children are at school, parents are trusting the school to be safe and gun free. Would parents have a say about the possibility that someone with a loaded weapon is in proximity to their child? I certainly do not want anyone who feels the need to carry a loaded concealed weapon everywhere they go, to be anywhere near my grandchildren.

5) There have been numerous accounts of guns being brought into schools by staff and accidentally left in the bathroom or some other location with student getting their hands on the weapon. It is just not safe for our children.

6) No one is allowed into the State House with a gun. Individuals are required to pass through a metal detector before entering. How are school staff supposed to feel safe with the knowledge that anyone entering the school could have a gun, or that the parents sitting across from them at a parent teacher conference could be armed? What if that parent did not like what the teacher was saying? This puts the teacher's life in danger. At sporting events a person could be sitting in the stands watching the game with a loaded gun on their person. These events can get heated. What assurance do we have that the person wearing the gun is not going to have a mental breakdown and start shooting?

7) Guns do not belong in schools under any circumstances. If someone enters the building with a gun that is cause for alarm and for a lockdown to be ordered. School staff simply do not know the mental state, motivation or qualifications of the individual with the gun. If concealed weapon holders are permitted to bring a handgun into a school how are staff supposed to know the difference between that individual and a potential school shooter?

I urge you to vote against this ridiculous bill.

Sincerely,
Cathy Harris