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Testimony in Opposition to LD 52, 518 and 1557

Dear Chairs Rafferty, Brennan and Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

Studies from Harvard researcher David Hemenway show that simply owning and carrying a gun creates new risks for the gun owner. "[E]very day, they have a chance to use the gun inappropriately." *How Often do People Use Guns in Self-Defense?* <https://www.npr.org/2018/04/13/602143823/how-often-do-people-use-guns-in-self-defense>

I'd like to illustrate how inviting guns into our schools also invites opportunities for them to be used "inappropriately."

Giffords.org records incidents of mishandled guns in schools. <https://giffords.org/lawcenter/report/every-incident-of-mishandled-guns-in-schools/> Their chart runs for pages, so I picked out ten to share with you.

- The District Transportation Director left her pistol in a small unlocked plastic case near her desk when she went to the restroom. The director had been trained as part of the district's concealed carry program and allowed to have a gun on school property. Two first-graders who were left alone in the office accessed the gun.
- A gun brought to a middle school by a teacher was stolen by two students.
- A school superintendent left a loaded gun in a school van, which was found by a student when the van was used during an athletic event.
- A school security guard unintentionally shot a school maintenance worker in the eye while showing him his gun.
- A sheriff's deputy unintentionally discharged his gun while alone in a classroom. A teacher in an adjacent classroom was hit in the neck.
- A school resource officer threatened to shoot a student trying to leave campus because the officer mistakenly believed the student was being truant.

- A school security guard pulled a gun on a student after breaking up a fight at school. The guard also threatened to kill the student while holding them by the neck.
- During a physical struggle between a student and an officer, the officer's gun unintentionally discharged when the student tried to grab it.
- A middle school basketball coach brought a handgun to school, which he showed to his team during practice.
- An off-duty police officer serving as a school security guard left a gun in a school bathroom where it was discovered by three young students. [There are at least a dozen gun-left-in-the-bathroom incidents in the chart.]

What really blows my mind is how many of these incidents involved police officers, sheriff's deputies, and school resource officers. People who had to go through months of training to carry a gun and have yearly training requirements.

If even these highly-trained people can momentarily screw up, it should bring home the point that the more guns we invite into our schools, the more risk we're creating that guns will be used "inappropriately."

Guns will be left in bathrooms, on buses, in classrooms unattended. For six or seven hours a day, five days a week, plus after-school activities, we will invite the potential for new risks for our students. All we need is a momentary lapse in attention or judgement and a lethal weapon is in the wrong hands. Or worse yet, it fires.

This proposed legislation ought not to pass.