

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, Members of the Joint Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

Mark Segar, of Freeport, past school administrator and teacher. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in urgent opposition to LD's 52 and 1557.

In these anxious times, we should make the good faith assumption that supporters of these bills believe they will make schools safer.

But more guns in schools make them more dangerous, not more safe. More at risk of a tragic accident, more prone to fear than reassurance.

Teachers are trained in child development, committed to building skills and nurturing trust. They are coaches, mentors, caregivers. As are other school staff who serve similarly.

The effect of a threat (whether real or hoax), the emotional impact on children, can be traumatic, and lasting. In terrifying moments, students need teachers giving them full devoted attention. Not making some sudden shift to combat.

Police and first responders have their own extensive training, the tools, and the experience in public safety. Their focus. Deeply honorable work as well.

You know the saying at the Patriots in Foxboro? "Do your job." That's how we should be helping teachers. Not adding something completely different to their duties.

The proposals in LD 52 and 1557 would erode confidence and make students and teachers more anxious, and less safe.

Some of the safeguards designed to keep school buildings and campuses free of danger from firearms, whether accidental or intentional, whether by adults or minors, would be lost.

It would be harder for administrators to know whether, and where, weapons might be present. In the event of a violent intrusion at a school, multiple concealed-carry handguns could create dangerous and potentially deadly confusion, mayhem.

Schools can be emotionally volatile places at times. Adolescents can be impulsive. Parents can be contentious. Anger can flare, at a game, a prom, or a school board meeting.

Knowledge that firearms are forbidden is one of the conditions that make it possible for teachers and administrators confidently to mediate disputes, defuse tensions, and resolve problems.

These proposals would make that important work harder, would put more lethal weapons into school settings at contentious moments.

And children will listen, will see what we do, what we value. Will we treat their schools simply as “soft targets” to be hardened? Young hearts may be hardened, too. If we treasure and protect schools, thoughtfully, professionally, our students may learn something about the best of what an open-hearted community can be.

Proponents of these bills may be well-intentioned, but the logic is lacking. And what could be next? Will we move on as a society — to put guns in the hands of the supermarket cashiers in Buffalo? The rabbi in Pittsburgh? The bible study group in Charleston? The dancers in Monterey Park? The bridge construction workers at the Yarmouth/Freeport exit on I-295?

Every piece of research, and every shred of common sense, should lead to the conclusion that these bills - and others like them - ought not to pass.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mark W. Segar, Ed.D.