

Dear distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. My name is Cathy Harris and I am a retired school teacher with over 28 years of experience. I am also a parent and a grandparent.

The idea that we should allow concealed weapons in schools or arm our teachers seems to come from the notion that school shootings occur because schools are “soft targets” and that having the presence of guns will somehow scare potential shooters. However, this premise is false. Two studies conducted by the US Secret Service contradict this idea. (Protecting America's Schools: A US Secret Service Analysis of Targeted Schools, 2019 and Adverting Targeted School Violence: A US Secret Service Analysis of Plots Against Schools, 2021)

These studies show that the motivation behind school shootings had nothing to do with the perception of the school as a “soft target”. Schools were targeted because the people the attackers were seeking to harm were in that school. Many of these plotters had little care for their own personal safety and some even planned to end the incident with suicide either by their own hand or via law enforcement. The presence of someone in the school with a gun did not deter them.

These studies have recommendations for prevention and intervention. I know some districts in Maine have implemented some of their recommendations. It is a proactive approach. Arming individuals in schools is a knee-jerk reactive approach which only puts our children in more danger.

More guns does not equal more safety. If that was the case America would be the safest nation in the world. Instead it has more mass shootings than all other industrial nations combined.

Having an unlimited number of armed individuals with only basic training in a school setting is a recipe for a disaster. School staff includes not only teachers but also, kitchen staff, Ed Techs, coaches, substitutes, custodians, and bus drivers. Any of these individuals could misplace their weapon, lose their weapon or have their weapon taken from them by a student. Any of these individuals can have a break down, just as easily as any other profession. They should not be wearing a gun, in a building with hundreds of children, if this happens.

Concealed weapons holders are NOT law enforcement and have NOT had to demonstrate any proficiency with a weapon in a crisis situation.

Finally, many parents do NOT want to send their children to schools where there are individuals harboring a loaded gun. Educators do NOT want guns in their workplace. This bill would make schools less safe and increase the chances of someone getting shot.

Thank you

Protecting America's Schools: A US Secret Service Analysis of Targeted Schools
www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/Protecting_Americas_Schools.pdf

Adverting Targeted School Violence: A US Secret Service Analysis of Plots Against Schools
USSS Adverting Targeted School Violence.2021.03.pdf (Google search)