

**To: Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Sen. Rick Jones Chair**  
**From: Julie Rowe, AFT Michigan Legislative Mobilization Coordinator**  
**Re: Opposition to Senate Bill 442**  
**Date: October 13, 2015**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the 35,000 school employees represented by AFT Michigan at K-12 traditional public schools, charter schools, early childhood centers, community colleges, and universities.

AFT Michigan is opposed to Senate Bill 442, which will undermine the safety of students, school employees, and community members. By allowing weapons in early childhood centers, K-12 schools, community colleges, and university dormitories and classrooms, the state would be increasing the likelihood of violence, not deterring it. The most comprehensive research finds that expanding the right to carry concealed firearms is associated with an increase of up to 9 percent in the rate of assaults.<sup>1</sup>

While there are cases of successful civilian intervention in mass shootings that involve former police officers and military personnel, research into every mass shooting incident over the past 30 years found not one documented case of an otherwise licensed civilian successfully intervening during a shooting.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to prohibiting the concealed carry of weapons, AFT Michigan supports prohibiting the open carry of weapons at schools. Allowing individuals to openly carry weapons onto school property undermines the purpose of creating pistol-free zones in the first place. The presence of weapons only increases fear and anxiety in places where members of a school community must be able to focus on nurturing growth in children through quality teaching and learning.

If a weapon is openly carried or concealed but unintentionally exposed and students or staff are alerted to the presence of a weapon, schools would likely be forced into lockdown while school administrators and law enforcement determine if the individual holds the necessary license or endorsement to carry a gun onto school property. This not only creates a sense of fear and distraction from the learning process, it specifically stops teaching and learning from taking place while security protocol is followed.

AFT Michigan would welcome the opportunity to discuss ways to improve student and school employee safety. To this end, we recommend:

- Ensuring school districts develop and implement concrete action plans for addressing threats to school safety and security, incorporating teacher and staff input.
- School-safety initiatives should include school-based responses such as increased attention to students' emotional and social development through enhanced counseling, social work, and health services.
- Investment in school support staff who are able to pay increased attention to students' emotional and social development through enhanced counseling, social work, and health services.
- Adequate funding to reduce currently-inflated class sizes and increase staffing to restore the capacity of school districts to maintain safety and order.

Our members have a deep desire and willingness to reduce school violence. However, introducing weapons to schools is not the solution. Schools must be safe sanctuaries, not armed fortresses.

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<sup>1</sup> Johns Hopkins, "The Case for Gun Policy Reforms."

<sup>2</sup> Scott Widmeyer, "Widmeyer National Poll: Public Says Arming Teachers with Guns Very Bad Idea," 2013, [www.widmeyer.com/blogs/widmeyer-national-poll-public-says-arming-teachers-guns-very-bad-idea](http://www.widmeyer.com/blogs/widmeyer-national-poll-public-says-arming-teachers-guns-very-bad-idea).





A Union of Professionals

## Gun Safety Facts

### The Human and Financial Costs of Firearms

- Seven mass shooting incidents occurred in the United States in 2012. These shootings claimed 72 lives and injured 68 more.<sup>i</sup>
- In the last 15 years, there have been nine mass shooting incidents at schools and colleges. These have claimed a total of 114 lives and injured 118 more.<sup>ii</sup>
- In 2008, 2,947 children and teens died from guns in the United States, and, in 2009, 2,793 died. That's eight children every day.<sup>iii</sup>
- More than 31,000 people a year in the United States die from gunshot wounds.<sup>iv</sup>
- More than 300,000 violent crimes are committed with guns each year, and more than 70,000 people are treated in hospital emergency departments for nonfatal gunshot wounds.<sup>v</sup>
- In a typical week, the cost to taxpayers of the crimes committed with firearms is more than \$38 million in medical care, social services, criminal justice costs and other expenses.<sup>vi</sup> That's approximately \$2 billion a year in direct costs to taxpayers.
- In addition to the human toll, economists estimate that injuries from firearms are a \$32 billion annual drag on our economy.<sup>vii</sup>

### Background Checks and 'Gun-Show Loopholes'

- In the United States, background checks are not required for the sale of firearms between private sellers, including gun show vendors.<sup>viii</sup> Only transactions through a federal firearms licensed (FFL) dealer require background checks.
- Private sales account for an estimated 40 percent of all gun sales.<sup>ix</sup>
- An unlicensed individual may transfer firearms to other unlicensed individuals within the same state "provided that he or she *has no reason to believe* the buyer is prohibited by law from possessing firearms."<sup>x</sup>
- Since 2000, in just the nine states that have reported data, waiting periods and background checks have led to the arrest of more than 10,000 people who had outstanding warrants or falsified applications for permits.<sup>xi</sup>
- Over the last 14 years, background checks, when applied, have helped keep more than 1.5 million guns out of the wrong hands.<sup>xii</sup>
- Technology allows 92 percent of background check determinations to be made on the spot.<sup>xiii</sup>

### States Need Support to Ensure the Background Check Database Is Working to Potential

- Millions of records for mentally ill people and drug abusers who are legally prohibited purchasers of firearms are missing from the federal background check database because state agencies lack the capacity to provide the information in a timely fashion.<sup>xiv</sup>
- States that received grants to improve transmission of mental health records to the federal background check database share information at nearly twice the rate as states with no federal funding.<sup>xv</sup>
- States that pass laws or regulations mandating that records be shared with the federal database do a better job of sharing data.<sup>xvi</sup>
- As of October 2012, 30 states require reporting of appropriate mental health records to the federal database.<sup>xvii</sup>

### **High-Capacity Magazines**

- From 1994 to 2004, new high-capacity ammunition magazines—those with more than 10 bullets—were prohibited by the federal assault-weapons ban.<sup>xviii</sup>
- A 2010 survey by the Police Executive Research Forum found more than one-third of police departments reported an increase in criminals' use of high-capacity magazines since the prohibition on new ones expired in 2004.<sup>xix</sup>
- As of May 2012, six states and the District of Columbia have rules limiting access to high-capacity magazines.<sup>xx</sup>

### **Concealed Carry Laws Don't Make Us Safer**

- The most comprehensive research finds that expanding the right to carry concealed firearms is associated with an up to 9 percent increase in the rate of assaults.<sup>xxi</sup>
- Among people convicted of serious crimes, those with concealed-handgun licenses were sentenced for threatening someone with a firearm 4.8 times more than those without.<sup>xxii</sup>
- Drivers carrying weapons are more likely to engage in aggressive and confrontational behavior.<sup>xxiii</sup>

### **The Second Amendment Allows for Regulation of Firearms for Public Safety**

- The U.S. Supreme Court has recently affirmed the right of the public to limit access to firearms by dangerous persons, to prohibit firearms from schools and other sensitive places, to prohibit carrying concealed weapons, and to put limitations on especially dangerous features of weapons, such as high-capacity magazines.<sup>xxiv</sup>

### **We Need to Reinvest in Mental Health and Other Supports for Troubled Youth**

- States cut approximately \$4.35 billion in public mental health spending between 2009 and 2012, leaving them unable to provide timely interventions and supports.<sup>xxv</sup>
- The cuts come at a time when the recession has led to a 10 percent increase in the use of publicly financed inpatient and outpatient behavioral health treatment services.<sup>xxvi</sup>
- Twenty-two states made cuts in the number of school counselors between 2007 and 2011, and more cuts are likely.<sup>xxvii</sup>
- The American School Counselor Association recommends a ratio of 1 counselor per 250 students. The national average in 2011 was 1 counselor per 480 students.<sup>xxviii</sup>

### **An Arms Race in Schools Is Not the Answer**

- The FBI and other law enforcement agencies have increased the training requirements and resources—including specialized virtual reality devices—for their agents in order to deal with close-quarters shooting arrangements.<sup>xxix</sup>
- Given the high degree of training needed for police officers to appropriately engage against armed assailants in close quarters, the International Association of Chiefs of Police has recommended against arming staff or volunteers to protect schools, calling it a "distraction."<sup>xxx</sup>
- Of shootings in emergency rooms in American hospitals, 23 percent are done with a weapon taken from an armed guard.<sup>xxxi</sup> The presence of armed guards who are not properly trained law enforcement officers may add to the danger at a school.
- There are cases of successful civilian intervention in mass shootings that involve former police officers and military personnel. However, research into every mass shooting incident over the past 30 years found not one documented case of an otherwise licensed civilian successfully intervening during a shooting.<sup>xxxii</sup>
- A nationwide poll by Widmeyer Communications found that 61 percent of the public believe arming teachers is a bad idea.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

## End Notes

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- <sup>i</sup> **Mark Follman, Gavin Aronsen, and Deanna Pan**, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2012: Data from Mother Jones' Investigation," *Mother Jones*, Dec. 28, 2012, [www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data](http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data).
- <sup>ii</sup> Follman, Aronsen, and Pan, "US Mass Shootings, 1982-2012."
- <sup>iii</sup> Children's Defense Fund, "Protect Children, Not Guns 2012," [www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/protect-children-not-guns-2012.pdf](http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/protect-children-not-guns-2012.pdf).
- <sup>iv</sup> Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research, "The Case for Gun Policy Reforms in America," 2012, [www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/johns-hopkins-center-for-gun-policy-and-research/publications/WhitePaper102512\\_CGPR.pdf](http://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/johns-hopkins-center-for-gun-policy-and-research/publications/WhitePaper102512_CGPR.pdf).
- <sup>v</sup> Johns Hopkins, "The Case for Gun Policy Reforms."
- <sup>vi</sup> Erica Goode, "Police Chiefs Focus on Disparities in Gun Violence, with an Eye Toward Solutions," *New York Times*, April 27, 2012, [www.nytimes.com/2012/04/28/us/police-chiefs-focus-on-disparities-in-gun-violence.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/28/us/police-chiefs-focus-on-disparities-in-gun-violence.html?_r=1).
- <sup>vii</sup> Johns Hopkins, "The Case for Gun Policy Reforms."
- <sup>viii</sup> Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, "Gun Show Loophole," [www.bradiycampaign.org/legislation/backgroundchecks/gunshowloophole](http://www.bradiycampaign.org/legislation/backgroundchecks/gunshowloophole).
- <sup>ix</sup> White House, "Now Is the Time: The President's Plan to Protect Children and Our Communities by Reducing Gun Violence," Jan. 16, 2013, [www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/wh\\_now\\_is\\_the\\_time\\_full.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/wh_now_is_the_time_full.pdf).
- <sup>x</sup> Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, "Best Practices: Transfers of Firearms by Private Sellers," January 2013, [www.atf.gov/publications/download/p/atf-p-5300-21.pdf](http://www.atf.gov/publications/download/p/atf-p-5300-21.pdf).
- <sup>xi</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Background Checks for Firearms Transfers, 2009-Statistical Tables," October 2010, <http://149.101.16.41/content/pub/html/bcft/2009/bcft09st.pdf>.
- <sup>xii</sup> White House, "Now Is the Time."
- <sup>xiii</sup> White House, "Now Is the Time."
- <sup>xiv</sup> Mayors Against Illegal Guns, "Fatal Gaps: How Missing Records in the Federal Background Check System Put Guns in the Hands of Killers," November 2011, [http://mayorsagainstillegalguns.org/downloads/pdf/maig\\_mimeo\\_revb.pdf](http://mayorsagainstillegalguns.org/downloads/pdf/maig_mimeo_revb.pdf).
- <sup>xv</sup> Mayors Against Illegal Guns, "Fatal Gaps."
- <sup>xvi</sup> Mayors Against Illegal Guns, "Fatal Gaps."
- <sup>xvii</sup> Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, "Mental Health Reporting Policy Summary," May 21, 2012, <http://smartgunlaws.org/mental-health-reporting-policy-summary/>.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Brad Plummer, "Everything You Need to Know About Banning Assault Weapons," *Washington Post*, Dec. 17, 2012, [www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2012/12/17/everything-you-need-to-know-about-banning-assault-weapons-in-one-post/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2012/12/17/everything-you-need-to-know-about-banning-assault-weapons-in-one-post/).
- <sup>xix</sup> White House, "Now Is the Time."
- <sup>xx</sup> Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, "Large Capacity Ammunition Magazines Policy Summary," May 21, 2012, <http://smartgunlaws.org/large-capacity-ammunition-magazines-policy-summary/>.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Johns Hopkins, "The Case for Gun Policy Reforms."
- <sup>xxii</sup> Charles D. Phillips, Obioma Nwaiwu, Darcy K. McMaughan Moudouni, Rachel Edwards, and Szu-hsuan Lin, "When Concealed Handgun Licensees Break Bad: Criminal Convictions of Concealed Handgun Licensees in Texas, 2001-09," *American Journal of Public Health* 103 (2013): 86-91.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Harvard School of Public Health, "Is an Armed Society a Polite Society? Guns and Road Rage," 2006.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, "Legal Action Project: The Second Amendment," [www.bradycenter.org/legalaction/secondamendment](http://www.bradycenter.org/legalaction/secondamendment).
- <sup>xxv</sup> National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, "Proceedings on the State Budget Crisis and the Behavioral Health Treatment Gap," 2012, [www.nasmhpd.org/docs/Summary-Congressional%20Briefing\\_March%2022\\_Website.pdf](http://www.nasmhpd.org/docs/Summary-Congressional%20Briefing_March%2022_Website.pdf).

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<sup>xxvi</sup> National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, "Proceedings on the State Budget Crisis and the Behavioral Health Treatment Gap."

<sup>xxvii</sup> AFT research from National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data comparing total number of guidance counselors by state in 2006-07 and 2010-11.

<sup>xxviii</sup> American School Counselor Association, "FAQ," [www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?contentid=658](http://www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?contentid=658), and National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data 2010-11.

<sup>xxix</sup> Kevin Johnson, "FBI Focuses Firearms Training on Close-Quarters Combat," *USA Today*, Jan. 7, 2013, [www.usatoday.com/story/news/2013/01/05/fbi-firearms-training/1811053/](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2013/01/05/fbi-firearms-training/1811053/).

<sup>xxx</sup> Scott Knight, Police Chief of Chaska Minnesota, Jan. 16, 2013., Testimony to the House Democratic Steering and Policy Committee, transcript at [www.whatthefolly.com/2013/01/17/transcript-chaska-police-chief-scott-knights-testimony-on-gun-violence/](http://www.whatthefolly.com/2013/01/17/transcript-chaska-police-chief-scott-knights-testimony-on-gun-violence/).

<sup>xxxi</sup> Gabor D. Kelen, Christina L. Catlett, Joshua G. Kubit, and Yu-Hsiang Hsieh, "Hospital-Based Shootings in the United States: 2000 to 2011," *Annals of Emergency Medicine* 60 (2012): 790-798, [www.annemergmed.com/article/S0196-0644\(12\)01408-4/abstract](http://www.annemergmed.com/article/S0196-0644(12)01408-4/abstract).

<sup>xxxii</sup> Mark Follman, "Do Armed Civilians Stop Mass Shooters? Actually, No," *Mother Jones*, Dec. 19, 2012, [www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/armed-civilians-do-not-stop-mass-shootings](http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/armed-civilians-do-not-stop-mass-shootings).

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Scott Widmeyer, "Widmeyer National Poll: Public Says Arming Teachers with Guns Very Bad Idea," 2013, [www.widmeyer.com/blogs/widmeyer-national-poll-public-says-arming-teachers-guns-very-bad-idea](http://www.widmeyer.com/blogs/widmeyer-national-poll-public-says-arming-teachers-guns-very-bad-idea).