

Senate Judiciary Committee

Brendan Bunnell 271-4063

HB 1793-FN, prohibiting public colleges and universities from regulating the possession or carrying of firearms and non-lethal weapons on campus.

Hearing Date: April 14, 2026

Time Opened: 2:49 p.m.

Time Closed: 7:55 p.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Gannon, Abbas, Altschiller and Reardon

Members of the Committee Absent: Senator Carson

Bill Analysis: This bill:

I. Prohibits public colleges and universities from regulating the possession or carrying of firearms and non-lethal weapons on campus.

II. Allows persons aggrieved by public colleges or universities that implement such regulations to sue such institutions for damages and injunctive relief.

Sponsors:

Rep. Farrington
Rep. Layon
Rep. Noble

Rep. DeVito
Rep. McDonnell
Rep. Sabourin dit
Choiniere

Rep. Granger
Rep. McFarlane
Rep. Sweeney

Rep. Thibault
Sen. Pearl

Sen. McGough
Sen. Sullivan

Sen. Murphy

Who supports the bill: 92 Individuals signed in support of this bill. For a complete list of those who signed in support please contact the Senate Judiciary Committee aide.

Who opposes the bill: 1872 Individuals signed in opposition to this bill. For a complete list of those who signed in opposition please contact the Senate Judiciary Committee aide.

Who is neutral on the bill: 5 Individuals signed as neutral.

Summary of the testimony presented:

Representative Samuel Farrington introduced the bill. He explained that on March 12th, 2026, a gunman had shot an instructor at Old Dominion University and wounded two other students. The other cadets in that classroom had apprehended the shooter, and that university had a blanket ban on firearms everywhere.

- Argued that the gun policy at that university left those inside that classroom as defenseless victims.
- Argued that criminals do not care about laws, rules, or morality. The representative stated that current gun control measures only restrict moral, upstanding citizens.
- Cited a shooting at the University of Virginia in 2007 that had resulted in the deaths of 32 individuals. One among these was a professor who put himself between the shooter and his students.
- Explained that gun free zones are attractions for mass shooters, citing the comments of a shooter in Buffalo, New York who killed 10 people. That shooter had stated in his manifesto that “areas where concealed carry is outlawed or prohibited may be good areas of attack.” The representative also cited the case of a shooter at Annunciation Catholic School in Minnesota last year, who similarly stated his intent to target gun-free zones.
- Explained that data from the Crime Prevention Research Center shows that 36% of all active shooter instances in the US over the past decade have been stopped by the “good guy with the gun.” The representative stated that this rose to 50% of incidents in areas with stronger second amendment rights.
- Cited the case of Elijah Dickens, a 22-year-old who stopped a mass shooting from occurring at an Indiana mall in 2022.
- Explained that the argument that this bill would make it more difficult for law enforcement to distinguish the good guy from the bad guy during an active shooter situation had also been made in 2017, when New Hampshire passed constitutional carry. Representative Farrington stated that data since this law was passed showed this not to be the case.
- Explained that there had only ever been one documented instance of the “good guy with a firearm” being mistaken by police.
- Explained that 92% of mass shootings occur in so-called gun-free zones.
- Expressed his understanding that members of the committee might not like guns and that this may be an emotional topic for some, but argued that individuals had a natural right to defend themselves with a firearm.

- Explained that there was a broad coalition of support behind the bill, including 400 students that signed a petition in favor of the legislation.
- Explained that the bill was also supported by professors and law enforcement including Sheriff Bill Wright, former police chief Charlie Reynolds, and former UNH police officer Joe Morganella. The bill also enjoys support from the Women's Defense League of New Hampshire, the National Rifle Association, and the New Hampshire Firearms Association.
- Urged the senators to support the bill because of the oath they take to defend the constitution, explaining that it was clear that individuals have a natural right to defend themselves.
- Senator Gannon explained that he is a major supporter of the second amendment, but that he had a few concerns. He stated that he had been a student at Saint Anselm College and that he could recall his dorm featuring a significant amount of partying and drinking at times. He expressed his concern that in such an environment, an individual could be tempted and able to steal the firearm of another student if they knew that it was kept in their dorm. He stated that gun ownership comes with certain responsibilities and that he feared that this bill could place firearms in dangerous, volatile situations.
- The senator also expressed his concern with the fact that institutions that are very familiar with weapons, including West Point, the Air Force Academy, the Naval Academy, Norwich, all have extensive firearms regulations and do not allow students to possess guns in their dorms.
- Senator Gannon asked whether the representative could live with a secured area on campus to store firearms being allowed by this bill. He expressed concern over the presence of K-12 zones on some campuses and with the potential presence of firearms at larger events. Senator Gannon stated that he had spoken with the security at different institutions who had expressed concerns around their ability to identify shooters.
 - Representative Farrington stated that he found the concerns around dorm environments to be the only concern which was reasonable.
 - The representative stated that he understood the concern that one student could be paired with another without choosing to live with a firearm. Representative Farrington explained that he could be open to an amendment to the bill so long as the language was written in a careful manner that allowed a rule for universities to require a lock box in the dorm for when the gun owner is not present.

- Senator Gannon asked to clarify if the representative felt students ought to be able to keep their firearms in their dorm.
 - Representative Farrington answered that he felt it was necessary that students be allowed to have firearms in their dorms.
- Senator Gannon explained that he had been on a sports team during his studies, and that had he left for a game or activity for an extended period of time, all of the other students in that dorm would have been aware of his absence. He stated that under this bill, that could mean a firearm being left unattended in his dorm for a long period of time, and expressed that he would rather see it stored on the dorm site but in a more secure location.
 - Representative Farrington stated that the police department was currently responsible for holding firearms for students. He explained that the issue with that policy was the potential to prevent students from defending themselves.
- Senator Gannon said that he had a statement from the police department at the University of New Hampshire confirming that they would allow non-lethal options like pepper spray. He asked if non-lethal options should be allowed inside the dorms.
 - Representative Farrington answered that non-lethal weapons as well as firearms should be allowed inside of the dorms. He stated that if a school were to strip students of the ability to carry firearms into their dorms, they would need to make a guarantee that students would be protected inside their dorms, requiring the staffing of a police officer inside of every single dorm at all times.
- Senator Gannon asked what the effects of the bill would be upon university insurance rates.
 - Representative Farrington answered that similar bills had been passed in about a dozen other states, and that there had not been insurance cost or liability concerns. He stated that he had an amendment that would indemnify the schools from the personal action of any individual that was bearing arms.
- Senator Abbas stated that New Hampshire was one of few states that did not prohibit an individual from carrying a firearm while impaired by alcohol. He asked if the representative would be opposed to an amendment to the bill that would support the university in prohibiting students from carrying firearms on campus when clearly impaired by alcohol or any other intoxicating substances.

- o Representative Farrington state that New Hampshire had reckless endangerment laws that have been used by police officers in the past to charge individuals bearing arms while intoxicated. He added that schools already have misconduct policies that they could use to prohibit alcohol.
- Senator Abbas asked whether the representative would be against having an amendment to allow the restriction of the possession of a firearm while intoxicated. The senator stated that by allowing universities to make this policy clear it might assist with the issue.
 - o Representative Farrington stated that he could support an amendment that affirmed the ability of the school to regulate alcohol and firearms possession under those circumstances.
- Senator Abbas stated that the open carrying of a firearm might present a distraction for some of those in a classroom. He asked if the representative would be opposed to any change that did not allow the open carrying or display of a firearm while in the class room.
 - o Representative Farrington stated that universities should have the same open carrying protections as permitted in state law on public property. He affirmed the importance of allowing students to defend themselves in such environments.
- Senator Abbas stated that such an amendment would still allow students to defend themselves via concealed carry, but asked why a restriction on the open carrying of a firearm in classrooms was objectionable.
 - o Representative Farrington stated that an individual could freely walk into the State House openly carrying a firearm, and asked why college students should be singled out as a lesser class of citizen with limited firearms rights.
- Senator Abbas stated that he was not aware that any individual could walk into a classroom on college campuses as they could into the State House. He asked if the representative would consider the prohibition of openly carrying in such circumstances an unlawful restriction on firearms.
 - o Representative Farrington stated that other states have protected open carry on college campuses, including Utah and Texas. He stated that those states had not seen issues of this kind.
 - o The representative stated that he would encourage classrooms to be treated in the same way as other public environments and to level the playing-field between these places.

- Senator Gannon stated that he had heard from the 19 private colleges in the state and asked whether schools like Saint Anselm would be affected by this bill, even if they had only taken a small amount of public funding.
 - Representative Farrington stated that if an institution accepted public funds, they should be bound by the constitutions of the United States and New Hampshire.
- Senator Gannon asked if the representative could address the concerns that individuals with firearms might be cause confusion during an active shooter incident, as raised by law enforcement members whom the senator had spoken with.
 - The representative stated that the data shows that this is not a major occurrence and that there has been only one case of an individual with a firearm being confused with a shooter during such an incident.
- Senator Gannon asked if this was the most expansive campus firearms protections bill relative to those passed in other states.
 - Representative Farrington answered that it varies, but that this bill would be the best campus carry statute in the nation.
- Senator Altschiller asked if Representative Farrington was a senior at the University of New Hampshire in Durham. She asked if this bill would fail to affect him, given that it would be implemented after his graduation.
 - Representative Farrington stated that thousands of people go to UNH or visit each year, and that it would still affect him.
- Senator Altschiller identified a comment made by the representative calling for younger individuals to join a militia and to launch a crusade to liberate New England from tyranny. In those comments, the representative had identified the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard as the first target. The senator asked if the goal was to put more guns into the hands of young people to put together such a militia.
 - Representative Farrington called the question foolish and stated that this bill would not put guns into anyones hands but instead respect the natural rights of individuals that are given by God alone.
 - The representative identified those comments mentioned by the senator as part of an April fools post.

- o Representative Farrington stated that the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard ought to be part of New Hampshire and identified previous efforts to identify that territory as part of the state.
- Senator Altschiller stated that natural rights were ascribed in the Constitution; and God is not mentioned therein.

Officer Nate Buffington, Chief of Police for the Plymouth Police Department, spoke in opposition to the bill. He explained that college campuses are crowded, dynamic, and increasingly impacted by mental health challenges.

- Explained that substance abuse can escalate certain situations on campuses.
- Stated that he could not support legislation that could increase the likelihood of a preventable tragedy, and that he was opposed to the bill due to concerns around allowing firearms into dormitories and athletic events, mental health and suicide, and due to complications, that could arise from a police response to active-threat events.
- Senator Abbas asked whether Plymouth State University would consider the mere act of possessing a firearm while intoxicated “reckless endangerment” as the previous speaker had stated.
- The officer answered that they did not typically enforce it in this way, and that it was one concern that his department had.
- Senator Gannon asked if he was concerned with an individual in the crowd at an event being armed.
 - o Officer Buffington answered that it was always going to be a concern and that it could complicate any response that law enforcement was forced to make.
- Senator Altschiller stated that the murder rate on campuses was 0.3 per 100,000 individuals, compared to 4.9 nationally. She asked how this would make the duties of law enforcement easier if campuses were already among the safest environments in New Hampshire.
 - o Officer Buffington answered that he did not think that it would.
- Senator Altschiller stated that she had seen research which showed that reckless behavior, suicide attempts, and fights become far more common when firearms are present on college campuses, and more common than the opportunities for armed students to stop crime. She asked if the concept of the “good guy with the gun” was regularly able to prevent crimes.

- o The officer stated that he had yet to see that be the case.

Elizabeth Clinton, President of the University of New Hampshire, **Don Burkes**, President of Keene State College and Plymouth State University, and **Chief Mark Collopy**, of the UNH Police Department, spoke in opposition to the bill.

- Ms. Clinton stated that there was no evidence that this bill would make students safer, and that data showed that these campuses carry policies tended to make individuals feel less safe at the schools where they have been passed.
- She stated that these policies lower perceptions of campus safety and reduce confidence in campus police. Ms. Clinton explained that those perceptions of safety mattered on a residential campus where students, faculty, and staff live, work, and learn together.
- Explained that the vast majority of surveys of students at UNH showed that students would not have come to the university if the bill had been passed when they were admitted.
- Stated that the bill would remove virtually all authority from campus leaders to regulate firearms on campus, including discretionary authority around the safe storage of firearms, limiting firearms in sensitive settings like large event venues, or areas where there may be minors present.
- Explained that there were a number of K-12 students at UNH almost every day for science camps, sports camps, and at the childcare facilities.
- Explained that the bill would also limit the abilities of schools to create policies around concealed versus open carrying of firearms. Ms. Clinton stated that this would make New Hampshire unique among the states that have such laws.
- Explained that the state of Idaho, where Ms. Clinton worked for four years before coming to UNH, has a similar campus carry bill, but that it allows significant restrictions to keep communities safe.
- Explained that there is an increasingly dangerous mental health crisis on university campuses across the country, and that many young adults are experiencing acute stress, crisis, or impaired judgment.
- Senator Gannon stated that female students, and particularly those returning from their work or studies late at night, might want to be able to carry a firearm for their protection.

- o Ms. Clinton stated that the school’s primary defense was the professional, certified police forces on these campuses. She stated that non-lethal options like pepper spray were allowed already.
- o Ms. Clinton stated that they had a very low incidence of those kinds of campus safety issues that the senator was concerned with.
- o Chief Collopy stated that he understood the concerns around student safety and that there were other programs on the campus to keep students safe, including self-defense, community outreach, and escorts when required.
- Senator Gannon asked Chief Collopy if he was against storing firearms in dorms.
 - o The police chief answered that he was against this idea.
 - o Ms. Clinton stated that any expansion of firearms in their academic and residential core area would fundamentally change the safety profile of the campus.
 - o Ms. Clinton stated that there were several existing models for this in other states that the legislature ought to study more closely.
- Senator Abbas asked if any member of the public could walk into a classroom at UNH and listen to a lecture.
 - o Ms. Clinton replied that while some classes had controlled access due to the nature of the sensitivity of the research or teaching, UNH was, for the most part, an open campus.
- Senator Altschiller highlighted the provision in the bill that would allow any “individual aggrieved by a violation” of the bill to bring a legal suite against the public college any its employees responsible for the violation. She asked if they saw this bill potentially setting up a professor uncomfortable with firearms, and who did not want to permit them during their office hours, for a civil claim for damages up to 10,000 dollars for each claim.
 - o Ms. Clinton answered that this was also her understanding of that provision.

Officer Jack Dalton, a Deputy Chief of Police in Durham, spoke in opposition to the bill. He stated that the bill focused on the question of how to keep individuals safe on college campuses.

- Stated that 525 individuals had been arrested since the start of the school year, with 359 of those being alcohol-related. The officer explained that 285 of those total arrests were students.
- Stated that this bill would add firearms into the equation, potentially leading to an increase in suicides and accidental shootings. He expressed the dangers of mixing gun possession and alcohol for young adults.
- Expressed concern that this could present training difficulties for officers when expected to respond to an active shooter on campus in regards to identifying the correct suspect; potentially forcing police departments to remodel their training programs.
- Senator Altschiller stated that it had only been a few years since police departments were able to get the funding available to do critical incident training and that those members of the Senate that carried firearms have been asked not to engage in the event of a shooter. She asked if this request would have to be extended to students.
 - Chief Dalton answered that it would be impossible to get the student body trained to respond to such threats with their resources, or those available to any state school.
- Senator Altschiller asked whether this bill might present a scenario in which students might be able to bring firearms onto campus and sell them to their friends while bypassing the requirement for a background check, as is legal in private sales.
 - The officer answered that he imagined it would.
- Senator Altschiller asked if the possibility that those students were suffering from mental health issues or had suffered a past involuntary commitment would be unknown to those that they were buying the firearms from, as is also not required under New Hampshire law for private transactions.
 - Chief Dalton answered that this was correct in most situations. The officer affirmed the dedication of police at UNH to respond to threats, citing a hoax call at Diamond Library last year which had seen every officer in the town respond within minutes to the potential threat.
- Senator Abbas asked if the chief would support the concept of requiring a student to undergo some kind of active shooter training if they wished to carry a firearm on campuses.
 - The chief responded that this would be very difficult and based on the specific scenario which they were trying to train for.

Sophie Gold, a student at the University of New Hampshire, spoke in opposition to the bill. She explained that she was a campus tour guide and that parents often asked her “Is this campus safe?” Ms. Gold stated that the answer to this question would not be a simple “Yes,” should this bill pass. Ms. Gold stated that she did not want to have to tell a parent that their kid could be the victim of gun violence.

- Explained that she is a Jewish student, and that she was unable to separate her identity from her sense of safety at a time when antisemitism is increasing across the country. She stated that she did not want to have to live in fear that an individual could come to a Hillel event with a firearm, or to have to tell her peers that they should arm themselves with weapons to be safe on campus.
- Argued that this bill would make students, especially those from vulnerable communities, feel less safe and not more.
- Senator Gannon stated that he has a daughter, and asked what Ms. Gold would say to an individual that wanted to be able to protect themselves with a firearm while walking at night.
 - Ms. Gold stated that they should instead focus on the root of the issue, and added that the campus at UNH was very well lit at nighttime. She stated that she did not want to have to rely on a weapon to protect herself from somebody else with a weapon.

Representative Bob Lynn spoke in support of the bill, asking the committee to recall the passage of a previous bill that had eliminated the requirement for a permit to openly carry a firearm. The representative explained that bill had seen many of the same arguments brought against it by law enforcement that it would make things much more dangerous and that there would be “blood in the streets.” The representative stated that this had not occurred.

- The representative stated that while some of the proposed moderating restrictions on the bill might be worth considering, the question was whether the second amendment was a real constitutional right or a kind of disfavored right.
- Stated that he did not believe the nation’s forefathers would have supported the idea that individuals should be denied the right to defend themselves during a mass shooting simply because it might make the response of police officers more difficult.

- Senator Abbas asked whether the representative would be opposed to an amendment that restricted firearms to concealed carry in a classroom environment
 - Representative Lynn stated that he did not feel this would be an appropriate restriction.
 - He stated that he would say to a professor who did not want a person having office hours with him to exercise a constitutional right that he could also say that he did not want any Jews, Catholics, or African-Americans coming into his office. He would agree with the professor who might say “You don’t get to make that choice.”
- Senator Altschiller stated that college campuses are by design concentrated places with many individuals. She stated that firearms are not allowed in sports arenas because the school recognizes that concentrated places like that are not the best places to have firearms present. She asked if this bill’s passage would mean the Whittemore Center at UNH being full of firearms.
 - Representative Lynn responded that it might, and that Senator Altschiller was unwilling to trust students.

Wayne Burton, a veteran who served during the Vietnam War, spoke to the importance of caution where public safety is concerned. Mr. Burton stated that during his training, the army had a practice system where soldiers had to identify civilians during an engagement. He explained that he had shot 3 civilians during this practice exercise simulating such a scenario.

- Mr. Burton stated that soldiers were instructed in some cases to shoot anyone looking suspicious, and that of the 10,900 individuals killed in Operation Speedy Express, it was later found that 5,000 to 7,000 of those killed had been innocent, unarmed civilians. He cautioned against creating a scenario where police entering an active shooting had two enemies, being the shooter and the students armed with firearms.
- Explained that James Madison, the author of the second amendment, and Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence had, at the 1824 University of Virginia Board of Visitors meeting, supported through a positive vote a rule prohibiting firearms on the campus of the University of Virginia. Mr. Burton argued that the founders that wrote those documents knew that free speech only goes so far and that it goes as far as public safety.

Laura Vincent Loudon spoke in opposition to the bill, explaining that she has nine grandchildren and that the eldest was planning to apply to UNH. She stated that

while she wanted her grandchildren to attend college, she was very concerned by the contents of this bill.

Explained that while she had no objections to the reasonable use of firearms for hunting or target practice, the presence of alcohol and the college environment could create a frightening situation when combined with the unlimited access to firearms by students.

Charlotte Hahn, a student at UNH, spoke in opposition to the bill.

- Explained that she was a Resident Assistant at Stoke Hall, a dorm with a reputation for being a party building for its proximity to Fraternity Row. Ms. Han highlighted some of the incidents that they had seen this year, including physical altercations, domestic disputes, and medical emergencies.
- Explained that she had been verbally assaulted, threatened, called slurs, and even physically injured while responding to these incidents.
- Stated that while she had never feared for her life while responding to these incidents, the passage of this bill could change that. Ms. Han explained that these situations could escalate with the presence of a firearm.
- Explained that RAs are not training to protect against guns or for CPR, and that they are instructed to never touch a resident unless instructed to by 911. Given this, Ms. Han explained that it would be absurd to expect her and her peers to feel safe when their lives could be threatened just knocking on a door.
- Stated that she might be the direct supervisor of 5 RAs next year, and that she did not feel that she would be able to confidently tell them that they would be safe being an RA if individuals could have firearms in the dorms.

Gabrielle O’Hearn-Veroza, a student at UNH, spoke in opposition to the bill. She explained that the display of firearms is not a neutral act but rather widely understood to be a form of intimidation; by both citizens and law enforcement.

- Explained that she was at the Boston Marathon bombings in 2013, and that she could recall the police capturing one of the suspects some time later via non-lethal means; as the presence of a firearm would increase fear, raise tensions, and create a more violent incident.
- Stated that the US military and law enforcement understand that the use of a firearm is only necessary in order to escalate force when verbal commands and the display of a weapon fails.

- Argued that staying alert of one's surroundings and choosing not to engage in risky situations can be as or more effective than relying solely on visible weapons.
- Explained that, in a civilian setting, lack of structure, training, and oversight when weapons are loosely regulated does not function as a careful step in the process of discipline but can instead quickly escalate a situation into confrontation, panic, and fear.
- Argued that we should instead be focused on reducing intimidation and lowering tensions in our communities, rather than creating ambiguity around behaviors that heighten both.

Benjamin Goghen, a student at UNH, spoke in opposition to the bill. He explained that the current prohibitions of firearms at UNH allowed for many of that campus' larger events like hockey and football games to not require metal detectors or significant law enforcement presence.

- He stated that the university would lose the ability to set basic safety expectations for events like lectures, admitted student days, performances, and sporting events as a result of this bill.
- Explained that he was an RA on campus in Durham, and cited an event that past Sunday at 3:30 in the morning when he had responded to a group of intoxicated students that had tried to kick down the door to another student's room.
- He stated that he had unfortunately been compelled to involve police in the incident, and asked the committee to imagine that event had one of the intoxicated students possessed a firearm.
- Argued that he ought not be expected to handle that level of added risk because he is only a student, and that this bill could impose that burden on RAs.

David Richmond, who had been an educator at UNH for 34 years, spoke in opposition to the bill. He explained that he had been within 10 feet of an individual with a firearm who was shouting violent rhetoric last month, and that this combination of guns and rage was frightening.

- Explained that the Founding Fathers had written a great deal about managers, in the 18th century meaning of the term that carried a sense of morals and ethics. He argued that manners taught us not to exercise our sacred constitutional rights in all ways and in all places. He highlighted some of the limitations on the first amendment, including shouting down speakers at a public hearing like that being held for the bill.

- Stated that the Second Amendment associated the right to bear arms with a well-regulated militia, and that there was no need for such a militia in a classroom. Mr. Richmond argued that a firearm would only serve to inspire terror and impede teaching in such an environment.

Representative Valerie McDonnell, a co-sponsor, spoke in support of the bill. She stated that the United States has recognized the God-given natural rights of adults for the last 250 years. The representative stated that the right to bear arms is enshrined into the New Hampshire Constitution and that the legislature had sole jurisdiction over firearm regulations according to state laws. She stated that that statute did not extend that authority to university systems like UNH.

- Explained that UNH had also been in opposition to the first amendment up until the legislature passed a bill to compel the university to respect that right of their students.
- Explained that the need for the bill had increased since its conception, citing a gunman that had opened fire on innocent students at Brown University last December. That shooter had ultimately been found dead in Salem, New Hampshire, which is the representative's district. Representative McDonnell stated that she owed it to her constituents to support safety in our schools.
- Explained that Brown University had the same restrictive gun prohibitions that UNH currently possesses; leaving the students defenseless.
- Senator Abbas asked whether the representative would be opposed to an amendment that would prohibit the display of a firearm in classroom environments.
- The representative answered that her preference was to see the bill pass as-is, but that she would not be opposed to a modification that recognized certain time, place, and manner restrictions to be reasonable.
- Stated that a similar House Bill from 2024, HB 1305, had accordingly recognized that free speech on campuses required restrictions in some select circumstances.

Representative Tim Horrigan spoke in opposition to the bill, explaining that he had voted against its passage in February and that it was not in the best interests of his constituents in Durham.

- Explained that college campuses had the same natural rights as any other group of individuals to defend the safety of the human beings on their property,

including by restricting the right to possess weapons or the use of weapons on their property.

- Explained that UNH is one of the safest college campuses in the United States, and that this bill would not serve to make it safer.
- Stated that the assassination of Charlie Kirk the year prior had occurred on the campus of Utah Valley University; a campus which had campus carry laws similar to those proposed in HB 1793-FN. The representative stated that these laws did not prevent that tragedy and could have made it easier to commit.
- Argued that the current gun rules at UNH were appropriate and had worked well in the past.
- Senator Abbas asked if there were any examples of amendments to the bill that would gain the representative's support.
 - Representative Horrigan stated that, while his preference would be to kill the bill, he felt that the university's ability to prohibit firearms in dorms should be protected.
- Senator Altschiller asked if the Whittimore Arena at UNH would be unable to ban firearms from being present in the arena should the bill pass. The senator asked what would happen in the event that a political candidate visited the campus and wanted to speak at such a venue, and expressed concern that the university might be setting itself up for private rights of action if such a candidate asked not to have firearms present in such a space.
 - Representative Horrigan answered that many candidates would likely not want to come to UNH and would instead seek out private venues that don't accept public funds. The representative also stated that the inability to police firearms possession at such venues could harm the ability of UNH to host certain sports games.

Julian Smith, a previous faculty senator at UNH, spoke in opposition to the bill. He explained that he had been present at UNH during the protests around the Vietnam War, and that he had opposed at that time the deployment of university police onto the campus with military rifles. He stated that the leadership at UNH had supported this measure at the time, despite now being opposed to this current bill. Mr. Smith stated that this bill would be "an invitation to a gunfight at the OK Corral,".

Tom Gormley, from Litchfield, spoke in opposition to the bill. He explained that he had owned guns for most of his life and that he had never questioned the right to bear

arms. He expressed his belief that this right was already well protected, and that given that the number one killer of children in the United States was guns, it seemed to him that there was another right going unprotected.

- Stated that the data showed that the availability of guns was far more influential and impactful on the prevalence of gun violence than mental health issues.
- Mr. Gormley has been a volunteer with the Sandy Hook organization for the past three years, and stated that such programs were successful generally in preventing violence. Mr. Gormley stated that that organization had prevented or helped to prevent 18 gun violence incidents over the past dozen years.
- Encouraged the committee to work on other types of prevention principles and capabilities.
 - Stated that he felt it possible that a middle ground could be found on the bill when asked by Senator Abbas.

Andy Darcy, a resident of Hinsdale and a student at UNH, spoke in opposition to the bill. Ms. Darcy recounted a dream she had when she was 5 years old about a school shooter coming to her school. This dream frightened her, and she expressed how fortunate she was to never have been through a school shooting event. Ms. Darcy explained that it had been a breath of fresh air to come to UNH and to not have to worry about firearms or the risk of a shooting, and stated that she did not want to be afraid again.

Representative Loren Selig, a representative for the town of Durham, spoke on behalf of her constituents in opposition to the bill. The representative explained that she had received a lot of calls from her constituents against the bill and that she was the parent of a college student that had once had to hide under their bed during an active shooter call in her first week of college.

- Stated that she had asked one of the police chiefs that had previously testified how they would tell apart individuals with firearms in the event of a shooting; stating that guns did not come with color coding showing good guys apart from bad guys.
- Stated, in response to the comments of a previous representative, that if a woman has been overpowered by someone, and has a gun to defend themselves, it is possible that the other individual is going to take the gun and use it against her. She stated that there are many other methods that are far better for self-

defense. Contrary to the claim that guns are a God-given right, the representative stated that the Bible instead said “Thou shalt not kill.”

- Explained that in a UNH survey, 81.8% of students had opposed the bill, with another 3.5% mostly opposing it.
- Senator Altschiller asked for more information about the incident with the representative’s daughter that had involved a lock down.
 - Representative Selig stated that during her daughter’s first week of college at the University of South Carolina an active shooter call was made which claimed that an individual was in the library with a rifle. Her daughter had been locked in her suite after a suspicious individual was spotted outside and had to barricade inside their dorm for four and a half hours. The very next day, a similar incident had occurred at UNH.

Todd Selig, administrator for the town of Durham, spoke in opposition to the bill on the grounds that it would make his role of ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of people and property in Durham more difficult. Mr. Selig stated that this would make UNH and Durham less safe rather than safer.

- Explained that the Durham Town Council had adopted a resolution on January 12th, 2026, in opposition to the bill.
- Explained that this bill increased risk on and around the UNH campus without any clear public safety benefit.
- Stated that RSA 187-A stated that universities were to operate with the highest degree of autonomy and self-governance. Mr. Selig stated that this bill would do the opposite and conflict with the autonomy the legislature has envisioned for the university system.
- Explained that suicide was a leading cause of death amongst college-aged individuals, and that access to firearms greatly increased the chance of that a suicide would be fatal.
- Stated that adding more guns into dorms, tailgates, and off-campus parties raised the odds that a bad night or moment of crisis would become a tragedy and complicates the split-second decisions that police officers must make.
- Senator Abbas asked if there was a compromise to the bill that Mr. Selig would recommend to the committee.
 - Mr. Selig answered that this was a bad bill and an issue of ideology for the sponsors who feel that guns should be allowed everywhere.

- o Explained that his charge was to look after the well-being of the town of Durham and that, in pursuit of that, they devote tremendous time and resources to hiring and training outstanding police officers, firefighters, and EMS.

Malcolm Colson, a student at UNH, expressed his opposition to the bill, stating that it would raise the level of fear and danger on campus. Mr. Colson also stated that this bill would make it easier for those struggling with mental health difficulties to harm themselves, while also increasing the chances of complications concerning an accidental discharge.

- Explained that arguments can easily turn violent or deadly; especially when alcohol is involved.

Molly Greenleaf, a student at UNH, spoke in opposition to the bill. Ms. Greenleaf stated that the bill would cause admissions to her college to decrease, while transfers away from UNH increased. She stated that she would be leaving the school if the bill passed.

- Stated that it could cause financial strain for the university and that taxes might be raised to compensate.
- Explained that the majority of students were against this bill, and that, in a democracy, the majority opinion ought to be prioritized.
- Stated that you could not prevent gun violence with guns, and that the increased presence of firearms on the campus would not increase student safety.

Vivian Oliver, a student at UNH, spoke in opposition to the bill. Ms. Oliver stated that while proponents of the bill had spoken of a God-given right to have a firearm, it was the constitutional right of students to have access to an education. Ms. Oliver explained that this right would be inhibited if guns were allowed on campus.

- Stated that the very idea of this bill saddened her, as students should be worried about exams and not if the student next to them is going to shoot them.
- Stated that UNH is a wonderful institution and that people should not feel that they have to leave the school, and abandon their education and degrees, for their own safety.
- Explained that UNH is within walking distance of an elementary and high school.

- Argued that a student's education should end with their graduation, and not a bullet.

Marissa Dwinnels, a student at UNH, spoke in opposition to the bill. She explained that she had received threats on campus due to her disability, and stated that she would not feel safe knowing that some of the individuals that have made those threats own a gun or would have the ability to follow through with their threats in a more violent manner.

- Stated that, as a sexual assault survivor, she has been very interested in ways to keep herself safe and that studies show that sexual assault risk increases with the presence of firearms on campus.
- Stated her concern for firearms being within walking distance of children at nearby schools.

Avery Andrews, a student at UNH, spoke in opposition to the bill. She stated that the campus had become an important community to her, and that students should have the right to not have firearms in their own homes. UNH requires students to live on campus for 2 years and could possibly be forced to live within an individual that they did not choose and who has a firearm.

Representative David Meuse, stated that legislators had an obligation to balance individual rights with the need to protect the public safety. He highlighted Article 3 of the state constitution, and stated that there were laws in New Hampshire, like those concerning felons and the right to bear arms in courtrooms, which limited individual rights in the name of public safety.

- Stated that this bill asked legislators to recognize one part of the constitution while ignoring others. Representative Meuse stated that the constitution was more than just a collection of individual rights put in a document and instead a social compact.
- Stated that the best thing that the legislature could do would be to leave well enough alone. The representative stated that the regulatory structure currently in place for college and university systems seemed to be working well, and that there had been no mass shooting incidents on campuses.
- Senator Altschiller stated that Article 3, which concerned the limiting of natural rights, had been passed in 1784 while Article 2a, which guarantees the right to keep and bear arms and asked if he was referencing this.

- o David Meuse said that she was correct and that it was passed in 1982 which is a fact that few New Hampshire citizens seem to have knowledge of.

Daniel Robinson, a student at UNH, spoke in opposition to the bill. He explained that the university had experienced detrimental budget cuts over the past few years that had heavily impacted the student body, and asked how the university would be able to afford to implement this bill.

- Explained that the fiscal note specified a cost of 100,000 to 400,000 dollars to implement the policy and that other schools that have implemented similar policies have spent over a million dollars implementing security measures and training.
- Stated that much of the funding for the university comes from tuition, and that, since the majority of the student body opposed the bill, the students would be responsible for funding a bill that they were against.
- Stated that the bill could also cause students to transfer away; further harming the financial circumstances of the university.

Bella Cannon, a student at UNH, spoke in opposition to the bill.

Ms. Cannon stated that the idea that anyone could carry a gun onto campus made her feel extremely unsafe and embarrassed to live in the state.

- Stated that this would increase anxieties on the campus around safety and would create division rather than unity.
- Stated that she was proud to be from New Hampshire but that she would not have chosen to go to UNH had this bill been passed prior to her admission.
- Explained that the bill would cost a drastic amount of money on a yearly basis; pulling from the already limited amount of funds that the university has available to it. This would result in less scholarships, less facilities, and less opportunities overall for students.
- Senator Abbas asked if there was a compromise to the bill that Ms. Cannon would propose.
 - o Ms. Cannon answered that the bill should allow for as many restrictions as possible, and that college students are not fully developed or always responsible enough to carry firearms. She stated that she did not trust that the bill could be enforced in a way that would be effective for all students, and said that the presence of firearms at all would be detrimental.

Caroline Hall, a student at UNH, spoke in opposition to the bill. Ms. Hall explained that she was a tour guide at UNH that interacted with prospective students and families on a daily basis. She explained that the university has been facing steep declines in its enrollment numbers of the past decade, and that this bill could worsen the issue.

- Stated that it would be unacceptable that she would have to tell high school students looking for a safe college campus that they would have no protection against the presence of firearms on campus.
- Stated that she wanted to maintain the current safety seen at UNH and to continue to see high school students get excited about that.

Rachel Stajduhar, a student at UNH, spoke in opposition to the bill. She explained that both she and her parents were proud gun owners, but that this bill did not support responsible gun ownership and safety.

- Explained that the bill would allow an individual to keep a loose firearm wherever they pleased, did not include any provisions around intoxication, or preventing individuals from carrying firearms in areas where they should not.
- Argued that the bill lacked common sense and prevented the university from doing anything to regulate responsible, safe, and reasonable gun ownership.
- Stated that the current system was extremely functional, and allowed students to access firearms whenever needed to go hunting, go to the shooting range, or for other activities.
- Argued that the state should be teaching students how to be respectful owners of firearms if they want to own them, and argued that this bill prevented this type of guidance.

Alex Marshall, a student at UNH, spoke in opposition to the bill. He stated that he had come to study marine biology in New Hampshire from Illinois, and that he wanted to stay in New Hampshire after his studies due to the state's history of active participation in democracy and lack of a sales tax. He stated that this was challenged by the intentions of elected officials in New Hampshire to challenge the 80% of students at UNH in opposition to this bill, making him uncertain whether he wanted to remain in the state.

- Stated that he would not have come to UNH had he learned of this bill as a prospective student.

- Stated that New Hampshire relies on internal immigration in order to maintain positive population growth. Mr. Marshall argued that young people like him were relied on by the state to contribute to the workforce as the population ages and as consumers to keep the state's economy strong.
- Urged the committee to refrain from advancing the bill without consideration of the long-term costs or the message that they would be sending when the wishes of their constituents are ignored. Mr. Marshall stated that it is possible to insulate one's self from constituent wishes but that, in the end, they can always vote with their feet.

Susan Kjellberg, a resident of Sandwich and a graduate of Plymouth State University, spoke in opposition to the bill. She stated that she was the mother of a student enrolled at the University of New Hampshire and a former social worker for the state that had focused on young adults and community health.

- Explained that she had grown up in a household fully armed with assorted firearms and that her father was a licensed firearms dealer.
- Stated that research and respected science showed that young people of college age are still developing executive functioning in their frontal lobes, which is directly related to impulsive decision-making.
- Explained that UNH and other colleges had a longstanding and deeply entrenched party culture focused largely on fraternities, and that the decision to add firearms into the community would be a recipe for tragedy, whether accidental or intentional.
- Stated that parents send their children off to college with the understanding that the administration is doing everything to keep them safe. Ms. Kjellberg stated that one of the appeals of UNH to her had been the very low rate of crime on campus.
- Urged the state not to fall prey to the pressure of those with a political agenda that is not aligned with the safety and well-being of children and to not make a regrettable and ultimate deadly choice.
- Stated that individuals with firearms are not able to reduce tragic crimes with any statistical significance, but that the data shows that an individual with a firearm is far more likely to cause harm to a family member, friend, or themselves; particularly when the volatility of alcohol and youth are combined.

Penny Dean, an attorney, spoke in support of the bill. She highlighted the Clary Act, and stated that rapes and sexual assaults on New Hampshire universities were underreported; disputing the claim that UNH is the second safest campus in the nation.

- Stated that she was insulted when individuals expressed their intent to take away firearms from women.
- Stated that it was not sensible to advocate for non-lethal weapons like pepper spray as a replacement for firearms.
- Stated that if students were drunk and in possession of firearms, they could be charged on campus just as they could be charged off of campus.
- Stated that this was an issue of rights and that it was insulting to restrict this right based on age.
- Senator Gannon stated that he had heard from some of the speakers that rape incidents were higher on campuses with guns; implying that they were less safe than other campuses.
 - Ms. Dean answered that if that were true those individuals would be offering those statistics.

Nancy Brennan, a teacher, spoke in opposition to the bill. She explained that a student of hers named Glenn had attended a party at 17 and had too much to drink. This student had shot himself after he fired a gun into the air; believing that he had killed another student that had fainted.

- Stated that she did not believe all college students are drunks waving guns, but that alcohol was a part of universities for a lot of individuals and that the legislature needed to be careful.
- Stated that a man named Joe had responded to the shooting of another student. This individual was trained, and intended to help with his own firearm. He ended up almost shooting the wrong person and had talked about his personal confusion afterwards.
- Stated that she was a UNH graduate, as was every member of her family, but that no further members would be going to the college if the bill passed.

Hans Hendricks, a Residence Hall Director at the University of New Hampshire, spoke in opposition to the bill. Mr. Hendricks explained that he had been in his role since 2023 and that he had responded to and seen a great deal of incidents on the campus, including the overconsumption of alcohol, mental health emergencies, sexual misconduct, and violations of the code of conduct.

- Stated that he had been a gun owner for a long time and that he had never had the inclination, nor the need, to have a weapon on the campus.
- Explained that UNH has an incredible police department and that they had done a great deal of training not only as a department but also with the Residents Life and Housing Department on de-escalation and that they had policies and procedures in place that needed to stand

Hannah Bowler, a Residence Hall Director at the University of New Hampshire, spoke in opposition to the bill. She explained that since she had first come to UNH in 2018, she had never felt unsafe. The campus has effective programs for safety including 24/7 escort services provided by the police department, the blue light system, first responders in residence halls, and the ability of the campus to keep dangerous weapons out of residence areas.

- She stated that the presence of a firearm could make the complicated situations that she responds to as an RA more dangerous.
- She addressed the claims that expanded firearms access would help mitigate sexual assault, Ms. Bowler explained that housing professionals had identified a red zone, which was what they called the first 6 to 8 weeks of a student's year on campus. This zone is when 50% of sexual assaults occur, and usually by acquaintances, partners, and individuals that students know. They frequently take place in residence halls and other places where alcohol and other affecting influences occur.
- Ms. Bowler argued that firearms would not prevent these situations from taking place, and called this argument dangerous. She stated that this argument would shift the burden of stopping violence onto the survivors in those cases rather than focusing instead on effective prevention strategies.
- She argued that the bill would ask individuals like her and her staff to continue stepping into crisis situations while increasing the likelihood of irreversible harm and reducing their ability to protect students on campus.
- Senator Gannon asked whether the escort service at UNH would protect nursing students that get home late and have a long walk back to their dorms.
 - o Ms. Bowler answered that the student could call at any time and they would get a response.

- Senator Altschiller asked whether Ms. Bowler had an office on campus.
 - Ms. Bowler answered that she did, and that she oversaw a residence hall of almost 300 students.
- Senator Altschiller asked if Ms. Bowler would be comfortable having firearms in her office in the event that this bill passed.
 - Ms. Bowler answered that she would not be.
- Senator Altschiller asked if she was aware that, in the event that this bill passed, she could be liable for at least a 10,000-dollar fine if a student or anyone else complains about not being able to bring a firearm into her office.
 - Ms. Bowler stated that she was, and that it was a horrifying idea. She stated that one of the things that she saw a lot was non-UNH students coming to her residence hall and practicing non-compliance in order to get paid for liability.

Sarah Gentile, a resident of Rochester, spoke in opposition to the bill. She explained that college is one of the most vulnerable times in a person's life. Students face pressure from family and peers, academic demands, financial stress, and, at times, social isolation.

- She stated that, for many students, college is their first time away from home to figure out who they are and where they belong.
- She explained that suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students. When a firearm is used in a suicide attempt, it is lethal in 90% of attempts. This leaves no second chance or opportunity for another to step in and no time for that moment of crisis to pass.
- She stated that this bill becoming law would bring that level of lethal access into dorm rooms where a student could be struggling in silence.
- She stated that she experienced deep depression during her sophomore year of college, and that she had become suicidal. Ms. Gentile stated that she was very lucky that she had access to mental health care and did not have access to a firearm.
- She stated that some of her peers from high school and college have succumbed to depression due to their quick, easy access to a firearm. She stated that not everyone has access to care or gets a second chance when lethal means are so close.

- She encouraged the senators, referencing the statistics they had heard on during the hearing, to remember that behind every number is a person, a student, a son, a daughter, or someone who is loved and worth of safety because they are human.

Rachel Rowley, Student Body President of the Undergraduate Student Body at UNH, **Ben Doyle**, Vice President of the Undergraduate Student Body, and **Debra AJamian**, External Affairs Chairperson, spoke in opposition to the bill. Ms. Rowley explained that they acted as the official voice of the undergraduate student body of 11,000 students and that their body was apolitical.

- Ms. Rowley stated that they had received over 2,300 responses in the survey distributed to the undergraduate student body. 85.3% of the students opposed the bill and 85.9% said that the legislation would have made them less likely to attend UNH.
- Ms. AJamian urged the committee to recognize the undergraduate body's overwhelming opposition to this legislation and to declare the bill inexpedient to legislate.
- Senator Abbas asked if they had heard anything from their student body on a different version of the bill that might not be acceptable, but perhaps less objectionable.
 - Mr. Doyle stated that he was not aware of any student support for other versions of the bill. He stated that the consensus that they had seen on campus was that the concept of removing the university's authority to regulate firearms in any capacity was unacceptable.
- Senator Altschiller asked how many students answered their survey and if it had been statistically verified.
 - Mr. Doyle answered that 2,361 students had responded and that it had been verified and made in conjunction with the UNH Survey Center.
 - Ms. AJamian stated that they had worked in conjunction with the UNH survey center to make sure that the survey was unbiased and that all of the statistics were sound. She stated that they also had statistics from each class and that the survey had been reflective of the overall demographics of the campus.
 - Mr. Doyle stated that the survey had given the option for moderated answers, but that most students had chosen to indicate strong opposition.

Benny Griffin, President of the UNH College Democrats, and **Skyler Cook**, a student at UNH, spoke in opposition to the bill. Ms. Griffin explained that she had a petition with 1,200 signatures opposing the bill, and that it was not a partisan issue, but a safety issue. She stated that her colleagues and friends across the state at Plymouth and Keene also did not want the bill to be passed.

- Ms. Griffin stated that any other action other than “inexpedient to legislate” would not only violate the legislators’ constitutional duties but violate the wishes for safety by students across the state.
- Ms. Cook stated that having unregulated use and storage of guns on campus would be detrimental to those who are facing a mental health crisis. She stated that the state needs to prevent the deaths of students before they occur by keeping guns off college campuses.
- Ms. Cook explained that when she was 14 she had witnessed her father leave their home unexpectedly to pick up her sibling from college. She later learned that her sibling had tried to commit suicide. Ms. Cook explained that she nearly lost the opportunity to know her sibling or to form the connection that she shares with them today if they had died that night. She asked the committee to consider what could have happened if they had easy access to a gun and what is bound to happen if this bill is passed.
- Senator Altschiller asked what the question had been on Ms. Griffin’s petition, and if they had any signatures in favor of the bill.
 - Ms. Griffin replied that the question had been “Do you support or oppose the passage of HB 1793” and that they had no signatures in support of the bill and 1,200 against its passage.

Ellie Smith, a student at Plymouth State University, spoke in opposition to the bill. She cited the title of the bill, “Protecting College Students Act,” and asked what it was that it was meant to protect, citing the lack of any previous shootings on New Hampshire campuses.

- She stated that there had only been two times where gun violence was used against university students in the state. Once in 2020 at an off-campus party, and again in 2018 at an off-campus party.
- She stated that the common pattern between these two were house parties and some sort of substance consumption that caused individuals to take actions that they would otherwise not.
- She stated that this would result in an inevitable rise in tuition from insurance companies raising coverage rates because of increased liabilities and increased security needs.

- She asked if this bill was meant to protect the daycares where young children are taken care of on the grounds of Plymouth, Keene, and Durham.
- She asked if this would protect the professors and students that will leave because they no longer feel safe in classrooms and dormitories, or the police officers that might have to put their lives even more at risk when they receive a call that an individual has been shot.
- She explained that the Rockefeller institute of government shows that higher gun ownership correlates with higher homicide rates, and that AFSP studies have found that the second leading cause of death in college students is suicide.
- She stated that property value would go down in the surrounding areas, making it no longer desirable for single families, and posing the risk that there will no longer be a buffer when the market downturns. She stated that the lack of admissions across schools would cost the state millions in annual, state, and local taxes because the University System of New Hampshire relies out of state tuition.
- She stated that Plymouth State University students and the surrounding towns did not want this bill to pass.

Dr. Colleen Higgins, who has been a pediatrician for more than 50 years, relayed the story of an 18-year-old college freshman that had killed his roommate with a gun on the campus of a state university. She explained that this individual had lacked the emotional maturity to make the correct decisions, and that he had killed his college roommate after that individual had harassed him. She stated that guns do not belong on campuses.

- Senator Abbas asked if there were any suggestions for a compromise that she would make for the committee.
- She answered that individuals should be around the least number of guns possible in their lives, and that they do not protect individuals.

Brady Grossman and **Emilio Cosgrove**, students at UNH, spoke in opposition to the bill. Ms. Cosgrove stated that her parents had been relieved when she had first enrolled at UNH as it is one of the safest schools in the country. She stated that this bill could change that and compel her parents to worry for her safety every day.

- Ms. Cosgrove asked how the senators would feel knowing that their children or loved ones were unsafe and how they would feel watching them attend a school hours away from home; not knowing whether they would come back.

- Ms. Cosgrove stated that she did not want to fear that she would fall victim to gun violence, whether intentionally or accidentally, when she should be focusing on her studies.
- Ms. Cosgrove stated that she had spoken to students at UNH that had said that, if the bill passed, they would only take online classes and never leave their room or simply leave the university. She stated that she would not have enrolled at UNH if guns had been allowed on campus.
- Ms. Cosgrove explained that while she supported the constitutional right to own a gun, she believed that regulations around the locations where a gun may be carried are essential for public safety. She stated that a school environment is not a reasonable location for the public to carry lethal weapons.
- Mr. Grossman stated that this year had been his first at UNH and that he loved it so far. However, he explained that this bill, if passed, would make him afraid to be on campus. He explained that he would be afraid that someone in his large lecture classes, which have up to 100 or 200 individuals, would be carrying a firearm and accidentally discharge it. He explained that he would be scared that a conflict in the room next to him would escalate to the point that a bullet would be flying down his dorm hall.
- Mr. Grossman stated that he would be scared that one of his friends would try to take their own lives, and that three individuals in his friend group had already attempted this in the past.
- Mr. Grossman stated that he had been at a few low points over the past year that he had not been able to seek help for. He expressed his concern that, had a gun been present easily on campus, he might not have been here to give testimony.

Rowan Lee, a prospective college student, spoke in opposition to the bill. He explained that this bill had made him consider looking at schools out of state rather than here in New Hampshire.

- He explained that his partner was a CA for Babcock Hall at UNH in Durham, and that they are already very stressed and depressed due to the extreme work that they have to do both at the university and for their occupation.
- He stated that while at UNH to support his partner, he had witnessed five brawls at a bar within two hours. He stated that adding guns to this environment could put everybody in that closed space at risk. He stated that this could result in somebody's child, brother, Father, or mother dead.
- He asked what the members of the committee would say when a shooting occurs to the parents, friends, siblings, or brothers of those killed.

Matthew Stern, a student at UNH, spoke in opposition to the bill. He explained that, while he supported responsible gun ownership, this bill was a financial burden that the state could not take on given UNH's declining enrollment and the likelihood that the bill would deter prospective students.

- He explained that the bill would deprive the university of much needed tuition revenue and that the university had already been forced to cut key services as a result of current struggles.
- He explained that he had met with members of the UNH administration in the fall to discuss increasing pharmaceutical access to students following the closure of the campus pharmacy and the nearby Rite Aid and that he had been told that the cost of maintaining a campus pharmacy was too high and not considered viable. The figure given to maintain such a service was less than the predicted cost of this bill.
- He stated that he would not be surprised if this bill ended up raising tuition and reducing financial aid; which many of his fellow students could not afford.
- Explained that there was also the unknown cost of potentially losing revenue streams for university facilities for private events like concerts.

Shirley Haranto, a single mother, spoke to the importance of stronger protections for individual rights, public safety, and accountability. She stated that she supported the bill, albeit with a few concerns. She advocated in favor of a prohibition on the possession of a firearm while intoxicated by alcohol, and stated that every individual deserves dignity, fairness, and respect.

Millie Cejka, a student at Plymouth State University, spoke in opposition to the bill. She explained that the bill would not only de-legitimize New Hampshire colleges' autonomy in regards to regulating safety but also take the power out of the hands of the people that understand campus safety best, being law enforcement and school administrators.

- She stated that the bill did not address the balance between rights and public safety, but would instead undermine it. She argued that protecting individual rights should not come at the expense of collective safety.
- She explained that the bill would force colleges to invest in security infrastructure that would put already limited educational funding towards preventable risks. She stated that this would not only be a logistical nightmare but would disregard the overall well-being of students, faculty, and staff.

- She argued that New Hampshire colleges already accommodate to our second amendment right, and that it was not up to the students to police themselves.
- She stated that just because something can happen does not mean that it should.
- Senator Abbas asked if Ms. Cejka had any recommendations to the committee on reasonable restrictions that the bill might permit.
 - Ms. Cejka answered that she felt reasonable restrictions might be allowing universities to regulate firearms within residence halls as well as academic buildings.
 - She stated that firearms do not belong in a place like an academic setting or in a residential hall where shared living happens.
 - She stated that one of her biggest concerns with the bill was the impact that it might have on student retention rates, especially for out of state students, from whom the majority of tuition dollars come.

Janelle LaPlante, a graduate student at UNH, spoke in opposition to the bill. She stated that she had read extensively about school shooting prevention and that one researcher stated that the perpetrators of up to 98% of school shootings had easy access to firearms. That same researcher argued that school shooting often happen in cases where there is low social control, including parking lots or athletic events.

- She stated that the CDC's Risk Behavior Survey that they run every two years indicates a mental health crisis since 2021.
- She stated that there was a concern with the mental health of this current college age group and that individuals of this age had underdeveloped prefrontal cortexes that limited executive functioning and decision-making skills.

Brent Tweed, a member of the Citizen's Alliance of New Hampshire, spoke in strong support of the bill. He stated that he had heard a lot about feelings, fear, perceptions, and opinions, but not much in the way of statistics or empirical evidence.

- He stated that this bill would simply make the rules for campuses the same as for private homes, Walmart, grocery stores, and other public spaces.
- He explained that when states pass permanent carry or campus carry laws, gun control advocates frequently warn of blood in the streets and heightened safety risks. He argued that empirical evidence does not support these fears, citing that, in 2025, 29 states had permanent concealed carry freedoms and more than

half of them had lower violent crime rates after enacting the legislation. He stated that between January of 2000 and January of 2023, the 20 states that had permanent carry saw a collective decrease in the violent crime rate, leaving them around 10% lower than the national average.

- He explained that a dozen states currently have campus carry in some form, and that a 2019 article at collegefix.com reported that several universities had reported no increase in violence even after the states legalized the carrying of weapons on school grounds.
- He argued that the campaign to keep guns off campuses has claimed that allowing concealed weapons on campus is dangerous, but that a study concluded that the available data does not support that campus carry causes more crime.
- Stated that the fear-mongering around this issue has been proven wrong time and time again, and that New Hampshire students and faculty deserve the same constitutional rights and tools for self-defense that law-abiding citizens enjoy everywhere.
- Stated that this bill was the right choice for safety, liberty, and common sense.
- Senator Abbas asked whether the versions of campus carry laws passed in other states had restrictions in their language.
 - Mr. Tweed answered that this bill would be the most liberal of any of those passed out of those 12.
- Senator Abbas asked if there were any restrictions within those 12 other states' bills that he would recommend as a potential amendment.
 - Mr. Tweed answered that he supported the bill as written and that college students should be treated like adults.
- Senator Abbas highlighted that New Hampshire lacks a law prohibiting the possession of a firearm while intoxicated. He asked Mr. Tweed if there would be any opposition to an amendment that allowed universities to prohibit the possession of a firearm while a student is intoxicated.
 - Mr. Tweed answered that this would be consistent to current laws that apply off-campus. He argued that individuals already have to act responsibly or there are other laws that they will be in violation of.

Justin Bonatli, a student at UNH, spoke in support of the bill. He explained that he spent the vast majority of his time on campus, and that he treated it as his home. He argued that he should be able to defend himself at his home in New Hampshire in the same manner that he would be able to at his home in Connecticut. He stated that the law of New Hampshire reserves the power of legislating firearms to the state, and not the universities.

Jonathan Manson, a representative of the New Hampshire Police Association, spoke in opposition to the bill. He explained that emergency situations involve a large number of individuals in a compact area and that there are concerns around the ability of law enforcement to identify individuals once they arrive to the scene. He added that New Hampshire has seen an increasing trend of swatting incidents over recent years, where individuals call in fake threats to law enforcement and compel a SWAT team response.

Representative Tony Weinstein spoke in opposition to the bill. She stated that UNH had a long list of prohibited items that were not allowed in dorms. These include halogen lamps, electric heaters, electric blankets, lava lamps, candles, wax tarts, incense, explosives, fireworks, hazardous chemicals, motorized vehicles of any kind, air conditioners, clothes washers and dryers, dishwashers, or water beds. These items are not allowed in dorms but are allowed in university apartments. She stated that firearms should be on this list.

Elliot Boutin, a student at UNH, spoke in support of the bill. He stated that he was a proud member of the National Guard and that he had chosen to attend UNH because he believes deeply in New Hampshire's enduring motto, "Live free or die." He stated that when he steps onto campus, and onto the same private property supported by his tax dollars, he is treated as a second-class citizen and loses his right to defend himself simply because he is a college student.

- He stated that as someone that serves his country and is trusted to carry a firearm in its defense, he finds this contradiction both frustrating and deeply disheartening.
- He stated that many in the veteran and National Guard communities also shared in this sentiment.
- He explained that his advocacy often places him in the public eye and results in his receiving threats.

- He stated that while he does not expect the University of New Hampshire to guarantee his safety, he does believe that he should have the same ability to protect himself on campus as he does anywhere else in New Hampshire.
- He stated that he had gathered over 400 signatures for his petition at the school, and that those in support of the bill shared a desire for personal safety. He stated that while interacting with these individuals, it did not feel as though they were in the minority but that many students wanted the ability to stop a crime from happening to them.
- He argued that this issue is not about politics but about principle. He stated that this was about safety, personal responsibility, and the respect for the fundamental right to defend one's life.
- He stated that he was not here to stir conflict but because students wanted to live in peace and freedom.
- Senator Abbas stated that it seemed as though those who testified in support of the legislation did not want the committee to change anything at all, but that those who had testified against just wanted the bill to go away, without any compromise between the two. He asked if there were any suggestions that Mr. Boutin might have for the committee on potential restrictions that could be amended into the bill.
 - Mr. Boutin answered that he would prefer the bill to stay as it currently is, but that he trusted Representative Farrington's judgement on what should happen with the amendment. He stated that he did not have a policy position on the idea of amending the bill.
- Senator Altschiller asked what the question had been on the petition that garnered 400 signatures.
 - Mr. Boutin answered that he believed it was "Do you believe in the right to defend yourself on campus?" and that it had then listed all self-defense tools.
- Senator Altschiller asked for clarification that it had not specifically referred to this bill.
 - Mr. Boutin answered that this was correct.
- Senator Altschiller referenced Mr. Boutin's statement that it bothered him that he was not able to carry on campus and that it made him feel like a second-class citizen. She asked whether he also considered himself to be a second-class citizen in courtrooms, where firearms are also prohibited.

- o Mr. Boutin stated that he did not, and that a courtroom was a different situation.

Representative James Thibault spoke in support of the bill. He explained that he is a student at St. Anselm College and that he strongly supported these protections for students' fundamental constitutional rights on campus. He stated that most of the testimony on that day had been from students at UNH but that he had not heard very much testimony from PSU, NHTI, or from any of the state's community colleges or private universities, and that he felt they needed to be represented as well.

- He stated that he had heard from students that, especially in the wake of shooting at Brown and Old Dominion, that they were not sure that they would be safe on their college campuses if they decided to go.
- He stated that he had heard this from some of his peers, and especially from female students at Saint Anselm who feel unsafe going out after dark for fear of being harmed.
- He stated that he had heard concerns about pepper spray violating school policies, meaning that students would either need to risk punishment from the school for utilizing a non-lethal deterrent to protect themselves or hope that they wouldn't be attacked because they have nothing to fight back with.
- He argued that students should not have to live in fear on their campuses because administrators might be too incompetent, corrupt, or untrusting to properly protect their students, or because they institute policies that actively prevent students from defending themselves.
- He explained that deranged criminals take advantage of gun-free zones to attack helpless targets who can't defend themselves. He stated that this bill would give those students a fighting chance if the worst occurred.
- Senator Abbas asked whether there were any prohibitions on firearms that the representative might support adding to the bill.
 - o Representative Thibault answered that he would defer to the prime sponsor, but that the legislature should instead focus on alcohol abuse on campus rather than on punishing students for exercising their constitutional right to keep and bear arms.
 - o The representative stated that he would understand if the committee wanted to amend the bill to ensure that students have to keep their firearms in a lock box or something of the sort if they are going to leave it in their dormitory.

- Senator Abbas stated that no student is forced to drink, and that a restriction on the possession of a firearm while intoxicated would be targeting an individual choosing to engage in that behavior. He stated that he was referring to a 21-year-old individual legally able to consume alcohol.
 - Representative Thibault answered that just as a student is legally allowed to drink alcohol, they should be able to legally carry a firearm. He pointed out that there is no constitutional right to drink alcohol, and that he personally had no interest in drinking.
 - Representative Thibault stated that school should be about education and learning rather than partying and destroying property, which he stated often happens at these parties.
- Senator Altschiller referenced the representative's statement that students should be able to protect themselves against deranged individuals with firearms and asked whether he would support individuals not being able to have a firearm if they had been involuntarily committed for psychological reasons.
 - Representative Thibault said that an individual currently could not possess a firearm if they had some sort of mental illness and had committed a crime, but that he did not support red flag laws.
- Senator Altschiller asked if someone who has been involuntarily committed should be able to own a firearm.
 - Representative Thibault stated that the state should take care of an individual who is mentally ill and not able to safely have a firearm.
- Senator Altschiller asked if he would be comfortable with one student selling a firearm to another in a private transaction.
 - Representative Thibault answered that he would not see an issue with that, and that he did not see the point in making different classes of adult citizens in the state.

Nicholas Hobart spoke in opposition to the bill. He explained that New Hampshire is a constitutional carry state, and that law abiding adults can carry a firearm for self defense outside of campus. He explained that these rights disappear the second that an individual walks onto a campus, despite these places being funded by taxpayer dollars.

- He explained that this creates dangerous, gun-free zones that do not stop criminals but instead disarms responsible students, faculty, and staff that follow the law.

- He stated that history shows that violent attackers deliberately attack locations where victims are defenseless. Mr. Hobart explained that Brown University and the strategy employed by the shooter shows that campuses are not immune to violence.
- He stated that law enforcement response times cannot always be trusted, citing the example of the shooting at Uvalde High School where it took law enforcement 77 minutes to engage the gunman.
- He explained that the bill would also protect the right to carry non-lethal self-defense tools like pepper spray and stun guns, which he felt was being under acknowledged due to the focus on firearms.

Mica Stark, President of the New Hampshire College and University Council, and **Mark Rubinstein**, Chancellor for the Community College System, spoke in opposition to the bill. Mr. Stark stated that the question before the committee was whether campuses across the state should retain the ability to manage safety on their own property in consultation with trained professionals. He argued that current law allows for this balance and that this bill would eliminate it.

- He explained that campus police chiefs, heads of security, and municipal police chiefs from across the state that are responsible for protecting students, faculty, staff, and visitors oppose this legislation unanimously.
- He argued that the language around “public funds” in the bill was dangerously vague and could reach any number of private nonprofits in New Hampshire that currently receive public funding.
- Explained that the bill would create a private right of actions with mandatory minimum damages, exposing campuses to a new wave of lawsuits at a time when institutions are already serious financial strain.
- Senator Gannon asked if they still would have come to the committee in opposition to the bill had the bill lacked the language around public funds.
 - o Mr. Stark answered that they would have.
 - o Mr. Rubinstein spoke to the differences found between this bill other campus carry bills in other states. He explained that there were some states that require enhanced permitting as opposed to the state’s concealed carry permit. He explained that other states require specific training, and that at least one state limited carry on campus to only faculty and staff and excludes students.
 - o He explained that the complexity of the bill lent itself to additional study and argued that it ought to be found inexpedient to legislate as drafted.

- Senator Gannon asked if federal law also banned firearms from being in proximity to K-12 facilities.
 - Mr. Rubinstein answered that there were recent legal battles over this issue, including one that occurred due to guns being prohibited inside a post office in Texas. He added that it was illegal to bring a gun into a post office in New Hampshire.
 - Senator Abbas clarified that there was an existing state law allowing schools to adopt rules prohibiting students from carrying on premises.

Olivia Fonseca, a Residence Hall Director at UNH, spoke in opposition to the bill. She explained that Residence Halls were highly dense communities where students are navigating stress, conflicts, and personal challenges. She explained that she had responded to incidents with students facing mental health crises, interpersonal disputes, and urgent safety concerns. She argued that the increased presence of weapons in these situations would fundamentally change how both she and her staff would respond.

- She explained that their work relied on the ability to act quickly and to protect their students; but that this bill would undermine that capacity.
- She explained that she was responsible for the safety of the nearly 3,000 students in their residential communities.
- She stated that she could not imagine having to call a parent and tell them that their student was being transported for a gun or weapon related injury.
- She stated that this bill's passage would cause current professional staff and student staff to leave their roles, and that it would be a struggle to fill these positions that are essential to protecting student safety on campus.
- She urged the committee to put themselves in their shoes and to oppose the bill.
- Senator Altschiller highlighted Ms. Fonseca's statement that dormitories can be condensed places dealing with stress conflicts and personal challenges. She stated that this sounds like a courthouse to her, and stated that the state did not allow firearms into those places. She asked if the legislature should refrain from allowing firearms in her residence hall for similar reasons.
 - Ms. Fonseca answered that she did not believe so, as it would be putting all of the students at risk and in particular the student staff that serve as the first line of defense when incidents arise. She explained that

it usually takes six to seven minutes for that staff to arrive when an incident occurs.

Zach Tirrell, the Chair of the select board of the town of Plymouth, spoke in opposition to the bill. He explained that he was a gun owner and that he supported the rights of law-abiding New Hampshire residents to keep and bear arms. He explained that this bill would create real problems for his town, his tax payers, and his police officers, who had spoken previously in the hearing.

- He explained that Plymouth State University recently dissolved its campus police department in favor of a life safety service agreement in partnership with the town. He stated that this made any change to the issue of safety on campus a non-abstract policy debate for his town, and would directly impact the working conditions for police officers and the demands of the town's budget.
- He explained this bill would introduce an unfunded mandate for a small town. He explained that the fiscal note estimated that the cost would be 100,000 to 500,000 dollars for the University System of New Hampshire, but that there was no new appropriation being proposed to help with that change.
- He argued that the private right of action included within the bill should also concern all fiscal conservatives in the chamber.
- Senator Altschiller asked to confirm that the town's municipal police force covers the university campus.
 - o Mr. Tirrell answered that they were the police force for the campus as of February 1st of 2026.

Representative Michael Granger spoke in support of the bill. He expressed his belief that there was a way to accommodate certain hesitations about the bill in a manner that would be able to get past the House. He explained that he would not be in favor of any amendment not approved by the prime sponsor.

- Senator Abbas asked for the representative's opinion on a restriction related to displaying a firearm in a classroom or academic setting while that individual is a student in the classroom. He clarified that he was not asking about concealed carry.
 - o Representative Granger answered that he believed that openly carrying a firearm was sometimes necessary but that he was happy to discuss the issue with the other sponsors.

Ellie Smith, a student at UNH, spoke in opposition to the bill. She explained that a protester in opposition to the bill had asked Sam Farrington earlier that day “Do students have the right to feel safe?” Representative Farrington had replied that they do not.

- She stated that those against the bill were not in the minority, but the majority.
- She asked how those present could be sure that this was a preventative measure instead of the direct cause of a future shooting. She asked how the police would mitigate these risks if students took matters into their own hands, and what police would do when they saw two guns drawn while responding to an incident.
- She explained that most campuses that do allow students to have guns in certain circumstances compel those firearms to be concealed or stored in safe boxes.
- Asked the prime sponsor whether he was comfortable with UNH students being guinea pigs in his orchestrated experiment. She stated that Representative Farrington would not be on campus when this bill took effect, which was ironic to her considering that the Representative had called those individuals threatening to leave cowards.

Holly Stevens, the Director of Public Policy at NAMI New Hampshire, spoke in opposition to the bill. She explained that many mental illnesses emerged in late adolescence and early adulthood, and that this was especially true for depression, mood disorders, and schizophrenia. She explained that this meant that young people may be dealing with untreated mental health symptoms just as they are launching into adulthood. She explained that her organization was gravely concerned that open access to lethal means such as firearms on college campuses may lead to preventable suicide deaths.

- She explained that 90% of those that survive a suicide attempt do not go on to die by suicide. However, she stated that firearms are extremely lethal, and that many individuals do not get a second chance after an attempt with a gun.
- She explained that in the last YRBS data collected as a state, 21.3% of New Hampshire youth have seriously considered suicide and 16.9% made a plan for suicide in the past year.
- She explained that 1 in 3 first responders have a mental health condition, usually PTSD, from exposure on the job, and that having to respond to an increased number of traumatic situations could end up increasing that.

John Bunker, a doctor from Stratham and a former Associate Dean in the UNH College of Health and Human Services, spoke in opposition to the bill. He explained that a John Hopkins University review of 111 high fatality mass shootings since 1966 found that only 13 occurred in a truly gun-free zone, and that there was little evidence that mass shooting perpetrators seek out gun-free zones in their attacks.

- He explained that most mass shootings are directed at a specific person, group, or institution, with whom the perpetrator has a grievance, and that they are typically not chosen based on whether the civilians are armed. He argued that grievances are usually what drive shootings.
- He cited a recent 2025 paper in injury epidemiology where researchers studied Arkansas, Georgia, and Texas, which implemented permissive campus carry laws in 2016 and 2017; comparing them to 324 institutions in 21 states that did not allow campus carry. He stated that this research found no evidence that campus carry laws reduced violent crime or burglary.
- He explained that research from Texas found that campus carry laws increased estimates of weapon violence compared to a control group. In Georgia, there was no change in victim violent victimization while perceptions of the campuses being unsafe and the fear of crime increased.
- He highlighted Dr. John Lot, the founder of the Crime Prevention Research Center. He stated that his work is frequently cited by the NRA and some lawmakers, but that it has faced significant criticism from the academic and scientific communities for both its methodology and ethical controversies. He stated that one report from the National Research Council that had reviewed his work concluded in 2004 that the evidence did not support the claim that right to carry laws reduce violent crime rates.
- Senator Abbas stated that New Hampshire is considered to have some of the loosest gun laws in country, but that it is frequently cited the safest state or one of the safest states to live in.

Tim Hoheneder, the UNH student trustee and chair of the University System Student Board on the USNH board of trustees and the External Affairs Officer of the UNH Graduate Student Senate, explained that he represented much of the student leadership across the university system and spoke in opposition to the bill. He stated that this bill would cause a decrease in the ability of universities to attract students.

- He stated that this would make New Hampshire the only state in New England to have a campus carry law of this kind and that New Hampshire schools would lag behind their peer universities in other states as a result.

- He stated that he was most concerned about graduate students, and the effects that this would have on the current graduate employee salary. He stated that the civil penalty associated with the bill was equal to half the annual income of graduate employees.
- He explained that graduate employees did not want to be put in the situation of being made afraid to come to work, and that they would not want to remain in a state where this legislation passed.
- Senator Altschiller asked him to speak to the retention of graduate students and the challenge the bill imposes.
 - Tim Hoheneder explained that graduate students often come from outside New Hampshire, including from across the United States and abroad, making their recruitment circumstances different from those of in-state or traditional undergraduate students. He stated that many international students, in particular, come from places with far stricter firearm regulations and may be especially alarmed by the prospect of openly encountering firearms in classrooms, faculty offices during office hours, or laboratories such as chemistry labs.
 - He argued that the possibility of firearms being present in those environments would be a significant factor for students deciding between attending UNH or peer institutions such as those in Maine or Vermont, and stated that it would deter both himself and others from choosing the institution.

Christopher Wade of Keene stated that he was not a student and noted that many students attending New Hampshire universities are only passing through temporarily. He described New Hampshire as a uniquely freedom-oriented state and argued that the bill would be consistent with that tradition.

- He acknowledged that the legislation might influence some students' decisions about whether to attend a public university in New Hampshire, but noted that private university options would remain available and would not be affected by the bill.
- He argued that while some prospective students who oppose firearms might choose not to attend, the policy could also attract out-of-state students who support such measures.
- He stated that opinions on the issue appeared divided and, for that reason, he did not believe the bill would negatively affect enrollment overall. He concluded by reiterating that New Hampshire is the "Live Free or Die" state.

Ryan Hebert of Manchester spoke in support of the bill. He argued that the New Hampshire Constitution clearly states that all persons have the right to keep and bear arms in defense of themselves, their families, their property, and the state. He emphasized that “all persons” should include college students and argued that equal rights should not end at the boundaries of a college campus.

- He stated that adults aged 18 and older regularly make serious decisions regarding housing, employment, transportation, debt, education, and personal safety, and therefore should not be singled out for lesser self-defense rights. He argued that campuses expect students to manage their own schedules, walk home at night, move between buildings, park in remote lots, and navigate the world independently, making it inconsistent to treat them as adults while denying them equal means of lawful protection.
- He further stated that the right of self-defense is most important in the moments before police or emergency assistance arrives, noting that officers are not constantly present in every parking lot, pathway, or walkway on public campuses. He said the purpose of the bill was not ideological, but to preserve the equal dignity and equal rights of all individuals. He urged the committee to vote ought to pass.
- Senator Altschiller asked how he reconciled Article 2-a of the state constitution with Article 3, which concerns the surrender of certain natural rights in society for mutual protection.
 - Ryan Hebert stated that rights must be balanced with obligations to society. However, he argued that college campuses are institutions of higher learning populated by adults who are there to learn, not environments like courthouses or schools with inherently different security concerns. He stated that while certain issues involving dormitories or particularly sensitive settings might warrant discussion, the rights of adults on campus grounds should still be respected.
- Senator Altschiller asked whether firearms should be allowed in condensed spaces such as childcare centers, theaters, arenas, gymnasiums, and event venues connected to colleges.
 - Mr. Hebert responded that such places were no different from other public venues like theaters or cinemas where adults gather elsewhere. He acknowledged that some language in the bill might potentially be amended, but maintained that individuals should not lose the right to defend themselves simply because they are on campus.

Elizabeth Montaigne of Derry testified in opposition to the bill. She stated that she had been a student at University of New Hampshire for two years and had previously earned an associate degree from New Hampshire Technical Institute. She said she had come to appreciate the communities and educational opportunities at both institutions and viewed New Hampshire colleges as places where students can thrive through meaningful peer connections and skill development.

- She described college as a place for the pursuit of knowledge where open debate and emotional growth should be fostered. She argued that allowing lethal and non-lethal weapons would not promote safety or inclusivity, but instead would make students feel less safe. She noted that students who lawfully own weapons are already able to store them with the university police department in accordance with existing campus policies and procedures.
- Ms. Montaigne further stated that an armed classroom would create a more tense atmosphere and be less conducive to learning because students might not feel comfortable sharing their opinions during discussions. She said that she had already noticed a decline in her own mental health, explaining that she felt increasingly hyper-vigilant and compelled to scan campus spaces for potential threats to herself and others.
- She argued that if the bill passed, fear, division, and the potential for injuries would increase, and urged the committee to oppose the legislation.

Kathleen Slover of Portsmouth testified in opposition to the bill. She stated that she had attended the House hearing on the legislation in January and left feeling saddened by testimony that, in her view, reflected significant mistrust of government and law enforcement.

- She explained that she subsequently joined GunSense New Hampshire and, over the previous four months, worked with others to speak with students and community members. She said the coalition also held town halls that included law enforcement officers, elected officials, university students, staff, and concerned residents. She noted that a one-page document of talking points had grown into five pages, reflecting the breadth of concerns raised during those discussions and echoed at the current hearing.
- She stated that two major takeaways emerged from that process. First, she said law enforcement officers demonstrated that they care deeply about public safety. She explained that officers took time to speak with her and others, answered questions, and made themselves available by phone and email. She urged the committee to trust law enforcement, stating that public safety is their responsibility and that an individual's exercise of Second Amendment rights does not create an obligation to protect others.
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Dr. Heather Barber testified in opposition to the bill. She commended the students who had testified on both sides of the issue throughout the hearing, stating that they had been extraordinary and that, as a former faculty member, she was very proud of them.

- Dr. Barber explained that she had served as a faculty member at University of New Hampshire for 28 years before retiring in 2021. During that time, she held various administrative, teaching, and service roles across campus.
- She testified that, over the years, she had seen the range of emotional pressures students face in a stressful college environment, including academic demands, financial strain, employment concerns, social pressures, relationships, and the added influence of social media. She stated that research indicates such pressures can increase the likelihood of depression, isolation, and anger.
- Dr. Barber stated that suicide is a very real issue on college campuses and expressed concern that the bill could increase rates of self-harm and suicide. She added that some students turn inward under stress while others may blame those around them, creating the potential for violence. She noted that emotionally charged interactions between students and faculty, coaches, staff, or classmates are not uncommon, and argued that easy access to guns would add too many unknowns to those situations.
- She also described participating in regular active shooter drills while at UNH, stating that those exercises were already frightening when imagining outside threats. She said the idea that students themselves could now be armed in classrooms or campus facilities was even more troubling.
- She stated that even a well-intentioned student carrying a firearm in her classroom would not make either her or her students feel safer. She noted that every public university police department in the state had said the bill would make their jobs more difficult, and she urged the committee to trust university police and security professionals.
- Dr. Barber concluded that she would be more concerned about students being caught in crossfire or about conflicts escalating when emotions and guns are combined in the same room.

Eli Orne, a freshman psychology student at University of New Hampshire, testified in opposition to the bill. He stated that he believed the legislation would increase the risk of suicide among students.

- He noted that many others had already addressed his concerns, but wanted to emphasize that ages 18 to 24 are among the most difficult years of life for many people and often coincide with the onset of serious but treatable mental illnesses such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.

- He argued that if the bill became law, some students would have less chance of receiving treatment and a greater chance of harming themselves. He shared that he had personally struggled with mental health issues and had known more than five close friends who had attempted suicide using less lethal methods and were alive today with no current intention of trying again. He stated that he was grateful he did not have access to a firearm during the hardest parts of his own life because he did not believe he would be alive today if he had.
- He further stated that suicide attempts involving firearms are highly lethal and that survivors can suffer severe disfigurement or permanent intellectual disabilities.
- He stated that while some gun owners may act responsibly and store firearms safely, the absence of mandatory storage requirements would expose roommates, visitors, friends, and party goers to unnecessary risk. He stated that there would be no reliable way to ensure everyone who might come into contact with those firearms could do so safely.

Jackson Conway, a 22-year-old political science student, testified in opposition to the bill. He stated that while he was not opposed to the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution in principle, he could not support the proposed legislation. He said recent events had shown the need for citizens to be able to protect themselves from government overreach, citing political unrest and growing surveillance technologies. He added that the political climate of the last decade had caused him to lose confidence in national leadership.

- He stated that despite those beliefs college-aged adults, including himself, were often not emotionally mature enough to handle firearms with the seriousness they require. He argued that broader cultural and societal problems needed to be addressed before policies such as campus carry should be considered. He cited partisan division and inadequate mental health care as unresolved issues that worsen existing problems.
- He stated that there may one day be a future in which students across America could carry firearms and feel safe doing so, but believed the country was far from that point. He emphasized that whatever decision lawmakers made, someone would be harmed.
- He said supporters of the bill would bear responsibility for accidental shootings, robberies, murders, or assaults that might occur if it passed, while opponents would bear responsibility for cases in which someone might have been helped by being armed. He concluded that he did not claim moral superiority, but wanted legislators to understand the consequences on both sides.

Steve Zemanek, a resident of Manchester and a graduate of Keene State College. He testified in support of the bill. He explained that when he attended Keene State, only about half of students lived on campus because housing was limited, with guaranteed housing only for freshmen before moving to a lottery system. He stated that he lived nearly two miles from campus, parking was difficult, and some of his classes ended as late as 8:00 p.m.

- He noted that many students who live on campus still work off-campus jobs and attend social events away from campus grounds. He argued that even if a university could create an idealized environment free of guns and crime, which he said was unrealistic, schools that restrict a person's ability to defend themselves assume responsibility for that individual's safety. He added that such responsibility would logically extend to students traveling to and from campus, something colleges cannot realistically guarantee.
- He also challenged the notion that the bill only affected young students, stating that at Manchester Community College nearly half of students were over age 25. Regarding dormitory concerns, he suggested voluntary housing arrangements for students who did not wish to room with someone who possessed a firearm.

Kevin Rondeau, a former candidate for Congress, stated that he supports the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution without reservation. He explained that he had recently spoken with the bill's sponsor, Representative Samuel Farrington, after attempting to contact him several times regarding other issues. Mr. Rondo stated that, because he felt the sponsor had not listened to his concerns, he opposed the bill in its current form, though he said he would otherwise support it if those concerns had been addressed.

- He stated that many of his concerns had already been raised by earlier speakers, particularly those involving suicide and mental health among college students. He noted that college is a period of significant transition and stated that suicide is among the leading causes of death for first-year college students. He argued that lawmakers should focus on understanding why so many suicides occur on college campuses, including pressures faced by students and high rates of first-year struggles, rather than focusing on restricting Second Amendment rights.
- He further stated that mental illness was the real issue needing attention and suggested that educators should better recognize when students may not be well-suited to remain on campus during periods of crisis. He referenced testimony from students who had expressed fear and argued that fear alone is not a legitimate basis for restricting the constitutional rights of others.
- He also stated that lawmakers are not responsible for the criminal acts of others and argued that crime should be addressed by punishing offenders after offenses

are committed, which he said would deter future wrongdoing. He emphasized that innocent people should not be penalized for the misconduct of criminals.

Mackenzie Nicholson, the co-senior director of Moms Rising New Hampshire, testified in opposition to the bill. She explained that the organization is a grassroots network made up of thousands of mothers across New Hampshire.

- She stated that one of the greatest fears shared by many mothers is the possibility of a school shooting, which she argued is not an unfounded concern. She cited national statistics indicating that, as of March 31, 2026, there had already been 32 school shootings in K-12 schools resulting in 15 deaths. She added that gun violence has become increasingly common and is now one of the leading causes of death for children and teenagers.
- She stated that parents do not stop worrying about their children once they leave for college, and that mothers remain concerned about their safety wherever they live and study. She emphasized that college campuses are not limited to classrooms, but also include dormitories, event spaces, arenas, parking lots, offices, libraries, community pools, and other facilities.
- She further explained that campuses also host dual-enrollment programs for younger students, youth camps, and childcare centers. She stated that there were at least five licensed childcare centers located on campuses in communities including Plymouth, Keene, Durham, and within the university system. She noted that those facilities operate under strict regulations regarding the storage and presence of firearms in order to protect children in their care. She argued that the bill could create conflicts with those rules and potentially jeopardize federal funding if centers were unable to comply with federal safety requirements.
- She also referenced the bill's fiscal note, stating that it raised serious practical concerns, including the possibility of higher insurance costs that could ultimately lead to increased tuition. She argued that those financial impacts would affect everyone, not just parents.

Kimberly Morin, a representative of the Women's Defense League of New Hampshire, testified in support of the bill. She stated that, while she would not list all of her certifications in safety and firearms training, the organization had taught hundreds of college-aged women, along with instructors and faculty from across New Hampshire, how to safely and accurately use firearms. She added that the group also trains women in situational awareness to help them stay safer.

- She stated that women are their own first line of defense and cannot carry campus security personnel or emergency blue-light systems with them wherever

they go. She argued that even if someone is able to reach one of those safety systems, help may still be minutes away when seconds matter. She said women should have the choice of how they protect themselves, regardless of where they are, and contended that the right to self-defense does not end when a student crosses onto college campus property.

- She further stated that students may lawfully carry firearms when they are off campus, but lose that ability once they enter campus grounds. As an example, she cited Amanda Collins Johnson, whom she said had been raped at gunpoint on a university campus years earlier. She stated that campus blue-light systems and campus security did not protect her, and that although Ms. Collins Johnson had possessed a concealed carry permit, she had complied with campus rules that prohibited carrying a firearm. Ms. Morin quoted her as saying she had been “legislated into being a victim” because the law intended to protect her instead left her defenseless against her attacker.
- Senator Gannon asked a question regarding possible compromise positions, such as allowing students to carry firearms to dormitories but requiring secure storage there and prohibiting firearms at large events.
 - Kimberly Morin stated that her organization was always willing to discuss compromises.
- Senator Abbas raised concerns about the lack of a New Hampshire law prohibiting carrying while intoxicated and whether universities should be allowed to regulate that conduct,
 - Kimberly Morin stated that there was room for healthy discussion. She said she understood some people’s fears, but also understood women who wanted the ability to protect themselves and did not believe they should become victims because of others’ fear of the unknown.
- Senator Abbas also raised the possibility of requiring concealed carry rather than visible display of firearms in classrooms.
 - Kimberly Morin responded that she personally believed carrying other than concealed was less safe because it could make the carrier a target. However, she stated that compromise could be achieved through university rules rather than statutory restrictions. She noted that current university policies already allow students to possess firearms if they surrender them to campus security for storage and retrieve them for lawful off-campus use.

Nate Dwyre, a resident of Manchester, testified in support of the bill. He stated that he wished to address the issue of mass shootings specifically. He argued that the

common belief that “good guys with guns” rarely stop mass shootings was based on flawed data.

- He cited the Crime Prevention Research Center, which he said reviewed Federal Bureau of Investigation active shooting reports and concluded that civilians had stopped approximately 43 percent of mass shootings in 2022.
- He stated that some incidents had been misclassified because volunteers, such as church security team members who were not formally trained guards, were counted as security personnel rather than ordinary civilians. He argued that when so-called gun-free zones were excluded, the percentage of mass shootings stopped by armed civilians rose to more than 60 percent. He stated that this suggested a roughly 20 percent increase in stopping attacks simply by not designating areas as gun-free zones.
- Senator Abbas expressed concerns about the possibility of multiple armed students firing back at a shooter and creating additional hazards.
 - Nate Dwyre stated that the likelihood of having twenty armed students in one small area was very low. When the hypothetical was reduced to five armed students, he argued that such a number of people could reasonably respond to a threat without creating chaos. He compared the scenario to churches, where dispersed armed individuals may be present among large groups and could respond effectively in an emergency. He stated that a crowded classroom or theater could present a similar environment.
- Senator Altschiller asked him to clarify the source of his statistics.
 - Nate Dwyer reiterated that the data came from the Crime Prevention Research Center, which he said reviewed FBI active shooting reports from 2014 through 2022 and found substantial errors in how civilian interventions had been categorized.

Eowyn Osborne, a student at Keene State College, testified in support of the bill. She stated that, as a young woman, she would be at a significant disadvantage in a physical altercation with a man, even if he were unarmed. She argued that no amount of training or pepper spray would necessarily stop such an attacker and described a firearm as the best equalizer in that situation.

- She stated that she had been followed on several occasions while walking home from off-campus locations, including beyond the well-lit Main Street area. She said that if one of those encounters had escalated, she could have been seriously harmed and would have had no reliable means of stopping it.
- She argued that voting against the bill would leave young women like her defenseless in emergencies and urged the committee to vote ought to pass.

Lucas Coriaty, a recent graduate of University of New Hampshire, testified in opposition to the bill. He sarcastically commended Representative Samuel Farrington for what he described as the bravery to disregard the will of fellow students. He argued that achieving agreement from 85 percent of people on any issue is rare, yet said an overwhelming share of students opposed the measure.

- He cited concerns about student mental health, referencing a reported 35 percent depression rate among college students. He stated that school shootings remain a pressing concern and questioned why firearms should be introduced into libraries, dining halls, and dormitories. He argued that the vast majority of students, numerous professors, and two university police departments had all delivered the same message to the committee: that HB 1793 was unwanted, unnecessary, and ill-conceived.
- He suggested alternatives such as continued funding for behavioral threat assessments and interdisciplinary approaches bringing together mental health clinicians, professors, and university staff to support troubled students individually. He also stated that, as a former UNH student who attended school with Representative Farrington, he believed the sponsor was out of touch with key stakeholders in the university community.

Isaac Rysdam, a freshman English major at University of New Hampshire, testified in opposition to the bill. He stated that when considering the title “Protecting College Students Act,” he thought of a parable in which everyone in the world receives 100 pounds of gold, making the gold worthless because everyone possesses it. He argued that if everyone has a gun, then a firearm no longer functions as an instrument of self-defense in the same way.

- He stated that supporters imagine a single vulnerable person arming themselves on campus, but argued that if the bill passed, many people would be armed, including not only potential victims but also potential perpetrators of violence. He cited statistics that, in his view, showed a higher proportion of convicted offenders owned firearms than the general adult population. Based on that comparison, he argued that the legislation would arm attackers as much as victims.
- Senator Abbas asked whether students had discussed actually bringing firearms to campus if the bill passed.
 - Issac Rysdam said he had not personally heard anyone say they planned to obtain and bring a firearm to campus, aside from individuals who had expressed that intention during the hearing itself.
- Senator Gannon asked if Issac had heard the testimony of Eowyn Osborne, a female student from Keene, who wanted protection after being followed.

- o Issac Rysdam responded that the person following her could also want to bring a firearm on campus.

Milo Mirate, a resident of Pittsfield, testified in favor of the bill. He stated that he graduated from Georgia Institute of Technology in 2018 with a computer science degree. He recounted a 2017 incident involving a troubled young man named Scott Schultz who used a pocketknife, summoned campus police, and provoked officers into fatally shooting him.

- He argued that banning guns, knives, or other means would not stop determined individuals from harming themselves.
- He stated that the current policy of banning guns on campus is not a solution to suicide and suggested that effective responses to gun suicides exist outside of additional laws or government programs.

Annie Ragland, an out-of-state student at University of New Hampshire, testified in opposition to the bill. She stated that she chose UNH over other schools because she valued the culture, people, and education.

- She recalled witnessing a fight on campus during school hours that university officials handled effectively by separating the individuals involved. She questioned how such an incident might unfold if firearms were present on campus, especially at night or if individuals were under the influence. She stated that the prospect of guns on campus would make her fearful, limit her willingness to go out at night as a woman, and interfere with her ability to focus academically.
- She added that she could not imagine taking an exam while knowing weapons might be nearby or someone might be openly carrying close to her. She concluded by stating that if the bill had already been law when she was choosing a college, she would never have attended UNH.

John McKenna, a member of the GunSense New Hampshire Coalition, testified in opposition to the bill. He stated that he viewed the measure as the most far-reaching and reckless campus-carry proposal introduced in state legislatures across the country.

- He cited Antonin Scalia and the *District of Columbia v. Heller* decision, stating that while the ruling affirmed an individual right to bear arms for self-protection, Justice Scalia also wrote that the right is not absolute and that longstanding prohibitions on carrying firearms in sensitive places such as schools and government buildings should not be cast into doubt. He also

referenced Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, noting that in establishing governance rules for the University of Virginia, students were prohibited from keeping or using weapons within university grounds.

- He argued that lawmakers should move beyond hypothetical scenarios and instead consider real incidents from states that had adopted campus-carry laws. He stated that documented examples from states such as Colorado, Florida, and Georgia included everyday problems such as firearms left at bus stops or threats made after dormitory altercations. He contended that there was little evidence of the defensive gun-use scenarios often cited by supporters, while everyday firearm-related infractions were the more common reality.
- Senator Altschiller asked him if he considered schools to be sensitive places as Justice Scalia noted in the Bruen decision.
 - Mr. McKenna agreed that schools are sensitive places, consistent with Justice Scalia's language, and reaffirmed that schools and government buildings were specifically cited in the testimony he referenced.

Phyllis Mackey, a retired marriage and family therapist from Newfields, testified in opposition to the bill. She stated that she earned her master's degree at University of New Hampshire and completed counseling work on campus as part of her training. She said that had campus carry existed at the time, she likely would have sought graduate education elsewhere and would not have allowed her children to attend a college permitting firearms on campus.

- She stated that she was surprised anyone would support placing guns in the hands of young adults whose prefrontal cortexes are not yet fully developed. She explained that the prefrontal cortex, responsible for planning, decision-making, and impulse control, typically matures around age 25 and later for some individuals. She contrasted that with the amygdala, which she described as a more reactive emotional center that plays a greater role in teenagers and young adults, contributing to impulsive behavior that can be worsened by alcohol or other substances.
- She further testified that as the prefrontal cortex develops, people improve in risk assessment, emotional regulation, and considering consequences before acting. She added that New Hampshire already has a suicide rate significantly above the national average and that firearms are a leading method of suicide.
- She argued that the bill appeared motivated in part by young adults imagining themselves as vigilantes or heroes who could stop a shooting, but questioned whether they possessed the judgment or marksmanship required in real emergencies.

- She stated that law enforcement personnel have warned that civilians carrying guns in such situations can create additional dangers. She listed risks she associated with campus carry, including accidental shootings, suicide, partner abuse, increased sexual assault, threats to campus safety, and risks to law enforcement officers. She argued that if lawmakers truly wanted to protect students, they should defeat the bill.
- Responding to previous comments about students walking alone at night, she stated that she herself had walked to parking lots at all hours and would not have felt safer carrying a gun. She said she believed she could have been overpowered and had the weapon taken and used against her. She also criticized the state's mental health resources as inadequate compared with neighboring states such as Maine and Massachusetts.

Simonida Thurber of Exeter testified in opposition to the bill. She stated that while students are managing new relationships, academic pressures, and newfound independence, their brains are still undergoing structural development. She explained that the frontal lobes, which govern impulse control and emotional regulation, generally do not fully mature until the mid-twenties.

- She testified that many serious mental health conditions, including anxiety disorders, major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, eating disorders, and substance abuse disorders, most commonly emerge between the ages of 17 and 23. She added that this same age group also faces elevated risks of firearm homicide and non-fatal shootings. She further noted that suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students and that firearms are among the most common methods used.
- Based on those concerns, she stated that she could not imagine circumstances in which bringing guns into dormitories, classrooms, final exams, sporting events, or parties involving alcohol would be a good idea.
- She also referenced her experience raising two children and bringing her therapy dog to campus during finals week, stating that she had firsthand knowledge of the stress college students face. She urged lawmakers to trust New Hampshire colleges and universities to continue managing campus safety while allowing students to focus on learning.

Kimberly Queenan, a college professor who resides in Litchfield, stated that she wanted the committee to hear a professor's perspective and was not attempting to persuade them, but rather to share her experiences for consideration. She testified in support of the bill.

- She explained that discussions about the bill at a weekend event caused her to realize that she feared for her job and believed other professors shared similar concerns, even if they did not always state them directly. She said faculty often prefer offices with windows because they view them as possible escape routes during emergencies. She noted that after transferring departments and needing a new office, she intentionally chose a windowed office for that reason.
- She testified that some past experiences with difficult students had heightened her concerns, particularly during office hours when she is required to keep her door open and does not know who may approach. She stated that if she cannot carry protection in her office or keep it in her car, she feels vulnerable both on campus and when leaving afterward for errands such as getting gas or going to the grocery store.
- She then described receiving multiple campus emergency alerts in a single year. Two involved incidents on campus that were eventually resolved, but a third particularly alarmed her. She said the alerts described a non-student fleeing police from four towns, entering campus property, parking near her building, exiting the vehicle with a gun, and running uphill toward the building where she was located. She stated that the building doors were unlocked and accessible to students, professors, and the public, and that she then received an order to shelter in place while feeling she had no means of protection.
- She explained that many of her students range in age from 25 to 70, including many veterans, and said she was open to compromise. She framed the issue as a right to defend herself and return home safely to her family, stating that she never wanted her family told she died because she could not protect herself at work.
- Senator Abbas asked whether professors were concerned about safety for themselves and students if campus carry became policy.
 - Kimberly Queenan replied that unrestricted roaming with firearms created concerns because danger could come from a student, another professor, or a member of the public at any time. She suggested that concealed carry in a classroom, secured check-in systems, or locking classrooms might be more manageable than unrestricted movement with firearms around campus.