



House Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee

January 14, 2026

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

Testimony of Chief Steven P. Lee, University of New Hampshire Police Department; and Lauren Banker, Senior Director of Government Relations
University System of New Hampshire

Dear Chairman Roy and Members of the Committee:

My name is Steven Lee and I am the Police Chief of the University of New Hampshire Police Department. We are a duly sworn law enforcement agency consisting of state-certified police officers and our department holds dual accreditations through the Commission on the Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) as well as the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators (IACLEA).

I have been a police officer in NH for almost thirty years and began my law enforcement career with the UNH Police Department in 1996. Throughout my career, I have held several positions at the campus, local, and state level, and served on a number of state and federal task forces. I have been a firearms instructor for over twenty years and I am a fifteen year active member of a federal specialized tactical team. I hold a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice Administration and a master's degree in International Criminal Law & Justice and Public Administration. I am a graduate of the 55th Session of the Drug Enforcement Administration's – Drug Unit Commander Academy, the 250th Session of the FBI National Academy, and most recently, the #611 class of Northwestern University's School of Police Staff & Command. I am also currently employed by two additional law enforcement agencies and serve as adjunct faculty at both Great Bay Community College and the University of New Hampshire.

Every day at UNH, my team and I take necessary steps to ensure that we are doing everything in our power to protect our students, faculty, staff, and visitors. In fact, UNH takes great pride to be consistently ranked one of the safest college campuses in the country by Alarm.com and Safewise.com.



We believe this is a testament to all that we do to craft safety plans and establish policies and protocols that fit our community best.

We respectfully raise several concerns with the proposed legislation.

- Firstly, campus police officers, like those at UNH, are trained to respond to incidents that require rapid decision-making to minimize the possibility of bystanders becoming victims of our efforts to bring a violent incident to a quick end. We strongly believe that introducing unsworn persons with firearms into a rapidly devolving, dangerous situation would undoubtedly put students, faculty, staff, and police officers at greater risk because many gun owners are not trained in responding to “active shooter” situations. Additionally, each year USNH hosts tens of thousands of guests at sporting events, outdoor & indoor concerts, theater productions, commencement celebrations, as well as many political campaign events. We believe that adding firearms visibility will increase the level of concern surrounding security, public safety, event management, and tactical response capabilities.
- Secondly, we believe the permittance of guns across our campus communities is more likely to increase the risk of suicide for students who are depressed or abusing alcohol. College students represent a high-risk population and are comprised of young individuals possibly facing feelings of loneliness, suffering from break-ups or substance abuse. Tragically, suicide is the second leading cause of death for this population, exceeded only by accidental death mostly from motor vehicle accidents. According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention roughly 24,000 college aged students attempt suicide every year, of those, 1,100 do not survive their crisis. Suicide attempts by drug overdose, the most common method, are fatal only about 3% of the time, whereas suicide attempts with firearms are fatal more than 90% of the time. A [2021 study from Georgia](#), following passage of a state campus carry law, examined the effects on campus safety before and after the bill passage. Respondents reported an increase in campus safety concerns, specifically a significant increase in fear of crime on campus, lack of confidence in police, and the perception that campus was unsafe.
- Thirdly, USNH institutions are home to several childcare centers and a grades 9-12 public charter school. The proposed legislation would conflict with existing statute that prohibits these two populations from firearm possession. Each university system institution is not just open to



students, faculty, and staff, but every year thousands of K-12 students enter our campus communities during their summer and school breaks for various camps and academic or sporting programs. This bill would complicate these operations, and we believe could possibly deter parents or families from continued participation.

- Fourthly, as written, the bill creates a significant financial burden across our institutions. The proposed legislation will increase insurance premiums, require enhanced security measures and training, and require a sizable investment in storage space for students to securely store their weapons at any time, including while participating in extra curriculum activities.
- Finally, state law entrusts the university system's board of trustees with "the management and control of all the property and affairs of the university system of New Hampshire". That grant of authority includes the obligation to provide for the safety of students, employees, and visitors. The system's firearms policies are enacted consistent with that obligation and are consistent with the Second Amendment, which allows limitations on possession of firearms in sensitive places like schools, courthouses, and government buildings.

In NH, we understand what needs to be done to keep our campus communities safe and we strongly believe that HB 1793 would jeopardize the great work that we are already doing to ensure the safety of students, faculty, staff, visitors, and law enforcement officers and respectfully request that you vote this bill Inexpedient to Legislate.

Contact:

Chief Steven P. Lee | Chief of Police, University of New Hampshire

Steven.Lee@police.unh.edu | Phone: (603) 862-7690

Lauren Banker | Senior Director of Government Relations, USNH

Lauren.Banker@unh.edu | Cell: (603) 475-4910