

AFT-NH Testimony on HB1793

From Debrah Howes, President AFT-NH



Thank you, Chairman Roy and members of the House Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee

My name is Debrah Howes, and I am President of the American Federation of Teachers–NH. I am here today on behalf of our 3,500 members who work in pre-K through grade 12 public education, in public services, and in private and public universities across the Granite State. We are taxpayers and citizens of New Hampshire, many with connections to the state universities—as former students, as parents of students, or as faculty.

For these reasons, we strongly **oppose HB 1793**—a bill that would prohibit public colleges and universities from regulating the possession or carrying of firearms and non-lethal weapons on campus.

We urge you to leave these critical safety decisions to the universities themselves, which have the expertise and responsibility to protect their campus communities. These institutions have a special duty of care to provide a safe living environment for students in dormitories, a safe learning environment for all students on campus, and a safe working environment for faculty, lecturers, and staff.

HB 1793 would ban public colleges and universities from having or enforcing commonsense firearm rules—including rules about possession, carry, storage, and even “lawful use” on campus. It strips campuses of basic safety controls, including where firearms can be stored, how events are managed, and how conduct processes are handled, while exposing institutions to lawsuits for trying to create rules.

Supporters argue this bill will improve campus safety. However, the [best studies](#) we have show the opposite: campus carry does not reduce crime. Research shows, [allowing more guns has not worked as a crime-reduction strategy](#). There is no reason to expect it will make campuses safer. If the legislature is concerned with protecting students, they would do better to let colleges and universities govern their own safety—the way they do now. In fact, with its current policies prohibiting students, faculty, administrators, and visitors from carrying firearms on campus, UNH is consistently ranked in the top 10 for campus safety in the country.

Removing campus rules and allowing more guns fundamentally changes the daily risk profile for staff—whether instructors managing disruptions, advisors delivering bad news, residence life staff responding to crises, or facilities workers entering spaces alone at odd hours. For students, [more guns on campus could increase the risk of injury, homicide, and suicide](#).

HB 1793 strips our public universities of the basic authority every workplace needs: **the ability to set commonsense safety rules about carrying, storing, and what counts as lawful use of a**

weapon. It replaces the expert judgment of those with the most experience with the campus community with a one-size-fits-all mandate that ignores evidence.

For all these reasons—protecting campus safety, preserving expert judgment, and preventing unnecessary risks—we urge you to find HB 1793 **Inexpedient to Legislate.**

Sincerely,

Debrah Howes

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Debrah Howes".

President, AFT-New Hampshire