

January 14, 2026

Chairman Terry Roy
Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee

RE: HB 1793

Dear Chairman Roy and members of the committee,

I write to express my opposition to HB1793 and urge the committee to vote “Inexpedient to Legislate”.

I have taken the few minutes required to read the bill and have taken a great deal more time researching the matter, reading the comments in support of HB1793 and preparing this letter.

While all comments warrant review, some are without merit. Comments in support of the HB1793 run the spectrum from those who have a trivial desire not to be inconvenienced when attending alumni events to some who abhorrently want to “*Make blacks and jews fearful again*”.

But there are others who support HB1793 and have taken the time to express their opinions in a thoughtful, well written manner. In general, those comments focus on the following.

- Constitutional right
- Good guy with a gun = saves lives
- Safety

Constitutional Right

The state constitution is clear, but so is the Supreme Court’s ruling in the District of Columbia v. Heller, (554 U.S. 570 - 2008) where the majority ruling upheld the Second Amendment’s protection of the individual right to possess arms and use them for self-defense but acknowledged that there might be some qualifications to that right.

- limitations on the type of weapon,
- prevention of convicted criminals from carrying weapons,
- limit their use in school zones or government buildings, and
- forbid the carrying of concealed weapons.

The opinion was not an unqualified endorsement of the right to bear arms for any reason in any manner at any location.

In McDonald v. City of Chicago, (561 U.S. 742 -2010) the high court found state and local governments are subject to the Second Amendment through the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Justice Alito writing for the majority, reminded us that the right to bear arms is not unqualified and that the restrictions recognized in the Heller decision remain intact, such as bans on straw purchases, restrictions on use in school zone and federal buildings, and bans on use by convicted criminals or the mentally ill.

The contention by supporters of HB 1793 that we all have an unqualified right to bear arms is simply not supported by the Supreme Court.

Good Guy with a Gun

It's understandable that members of the House would feel compelled to prepare HB1793. It seems that there is a mass killing nearly every week. In addition, perhaps the recent murders at Brown University contributed to the bill's introduction.

I was astonished to learn from 2014 to 2024 there was an 85% increase in mass shootings, and more than 5,500 people have been killed. However, what's more astonishing is that those 5,500 people only accounted for approximately 3% of gun homicides during that period.

An updated article in *Campus Safety* reported that "*at least 119 people have been killed in 16 mass shootings at U.S. colleges since 1966.*" Two thirds of those incidents occurred in the last 18 years.

Of the 5,500 people killed in mass shootings between 2014 to 2024, only 21 were victims on college campuses.

While it's clear that mass shootings have increased in our society at large and on our college campuses, the numbers also show these are extremely rare events. It is highly unlikely that a legally armed person at UNH or any college campus in the United States, would ever encounter a mass shooter situation. Consider that the Pew Research Center reports only 27% of all police officers have ever fired their service weapon while on the job.

I will not challenge the hypothetical situation of a member of the public stopping or minimizing the tragedy associated with a mass shooting event. But I do challenge the notion of its occurrence warranting this proposed legislation.

If committee members support the bill to potentially address an active shooter, one really needs to perform a degree of due diligence to weigh the costs and benefits. Please think about the benefit of addressing this rare catastrophic event, with the unintended, certain major consequences.

Safety

Research indicates having guns on campus decreases safety, you can find studies that support this contention. If you haven't done your own research, you're not ready to vote on this bill.

Allowing guns on campus will result in increases to the following.

- interpersonal disputes that escalate into gun violence,
- premeditated acts of violence against an individual,
- suicides or murder/suicides, and
- unintentional shootings or discharges

I would like to remind the committee that most campuses that allow guns on campus have training and/or permit requirements. NH has neither and this bill does nothing to address that matter.

Has the committee asked the people who live and work here if they will feel safer if guns are allowed on campus? I would be curious to know, and you should be too.

As residents of Durham, my wife and I walk through campus on the weekends. I never gave much thought to my safety as I never felt it threatened. It's odd to think that if the bill passes, I'm inclined to feel less safe when walking around the campus. I certainly don't want to be the only person without a gun, so let's bring it along just in case.

I wonder how many students will feel the same way on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights when out and about in Town?

Have any committee members experienced the first warm spring weekend nights on campus? How about Home Coming or a Patriot victory in the Superbowl?

Unlicensed, untrained, intoxicated and armed. Not a safe combination.

Research indicates that the chances of injury or death via a firearm increase if there is a weapon in the house/dormitory. I expect the university will need to address the storage of firearms and ammunition in dormitories and recreation facilities to provide a safe environment and avoid potential lawsuits regarding unfettered access.

Mental illness is a significant problem among college students. Many college students report that they have "overwhelming anxiety" and depression. Depression and access to a gun is not a recipe for safety.

Research indicates that HB1793 would likely lead to more gun homicides and suicides, more nonfatal shootings, and more threats with a firearm on NH college campuses. That's not safe.

If your support is to prevent or limit a mass shooting event, please consider the remote chances of that event occurring and compare that to the high probability of a drunk college kid doing something stupid that results in injury or death.

If your support is to improve safety on campus and reduce crime, see the drunk college kid above.

I urge the members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee to find HB1793 "Inexpedient to Legislate".

Your time and attention to this matter is appreciated.

All the best

Richard Kelley