

**Testimony in Favor of HB 1034-FN:
“AN ACT relative to possession of firearms on school property.”**

Rep. Timothy Horrigan (Strafford 10)
House Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee
January 28, 2026

If HB 1034 were to be passed into law, illegal possession of a firearm on school property would be a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by no more than a year in prison and a fine of no more than \$2000. This is on top of existing penalties if the gun is used to threaten, endanger, harass, or assault anyone. This is also on top of any other penalties for intruding or misbehaving on school property.

This bill complements federal law which already restricts guns in schools. Local and state police forces would be empowered to respond to certain threatening situations which currently can be dealt with only by federal agencies. This bill also complements schools' other rules, which regulate all sorts of potentially unsafe or disruptive activities which are not necessarily illegal off-campus.

During previous debates in years past on similar bills, there was a lot of talk about arming teachers. Under current law, teachers can already be armed. However, they need permission, since the possession and use of weapons on campus is an issue which can be (and always is) regulated by a school's policies and rules. HB 1034 creates a standard procedure allowing school boards to authorize an individual teacher (or any other individual) to carry guns on campus.

It is unrealistic to expect teachers to be eager to serve double duty as armed guards. Guns and ammo are expensive. We already expect teachers to buy school supplies and a host of other classroom necessities. Teachers are currently subject to discipline if they improperly hit or restrain a student (or even another school employee.) Creating policies for when teachers are allowed to shoot to kill seems virtually impossible. (This is an issue which even police departments struggle with.)

Speaking of armed guards, this bill forbids public schools from hiring personnel whose sole purpose is to be an armed guard, although they still can hire armed personnel who have other duties. Any such armed personnel have to be otherwise qualified to work with students in a public school. This provision does not apply to local police officers assigned to be school resource officers.

Teachers, other school employees, and students who violate any school rule or endanger their colleagues can already be punished. This would still be true if HB 1034 passes into law. The only difference would be that on top of any other existing sanctions, carrying a firearm on campus without permission would henceforth be a Class A misdemeanor. This would also apply to anyone else who knowingly carries a firearm on campus without permission.