AFT-NH Testimony supporting HB 1034
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, President of the American Federation of Teachers–NH. I am here today on behalf of our 3,500 members who work in preK 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, and many of us are parents or grandparents of public-school students.

We strongly support **HB 1034**—a bill that would prohibit knowingly carrying a firearm in a safe school zone. As educators and school staff, our members take on two profound responsibilities every day: to help students learn and grow, and to make sure that everyone – children and adults alike – returns home safely at the end of the day. That is the basic promise families expect from their public schools and our members take that responsibility deeply to heart. Allowing firearms in schools undermines that promise and puts both learning and safety unnecessarily at risk.

Schools must be places where students' curiosity, trust and connection can thrive. Teachers and staff strive to build inclusive classrooms where students have confidence to explore new ideas, take academic risks, and learn how to collaborate through challenges. The presence of firearms in schools creates an atmosphere of tension, wariness and fear, undermining the calm, predictable routine schools rely on. It disrupts that learning environment and can increase the likelihood of violence.

The data supports keeping guns out of schools:

The presence of more guns leads to greater chances of injury, crisis and death.

- All the research points to guns increasing the risk of tragedies—accidental shootings, misuse, and preventable death—with absolutely no evidence of increased safety.[i], [ii], [iii], [iv], [v]

School staff don't need guns. There's no evidence that arming staff prevents anything.

- RAND's evidence review found that studies claiming guns in K-12 schools prevent crime don't meet empirical research standards—they are either inconclusive, conceptual, or theoretical at best. Keeping our kids safe isn't conceptual or theoretical.[vi], [vii]

Keep schools for learning—not armed confrontation.

- Educators are trained to teach, mentor, and de-escalate—not to act as armed security. Teachers "are not, and should not be expected to be, trained law enforcement officers." [viii]
- Arming teachers increases distrust, anxiety and fear among students, the exact opposite of a healthy learning environment.[ix], [x]

Educators themselves—the people who know best—don't want this.

- A nationally representative RAND survey found more than half of teachers say teacher-carry would make schools less safe (20 percent say safer). (RAND Corporation)
- More than 75 percent of AFT's own members oppose arming teachers and staff.[xi]

Focus resources on strategies that don't create new dangers.

- Arming teachers can divert funding and resources from real solutions that support students and educators.[xii] (Everytown Support Fund)
- If we want to keep our kids safe, we need to invest in staffing and student support rather than pouring resources into high-risk measures that lack proof.

We all want safe schools. But adding guns will only make them more dangerous. That is why we urge you to recommend **HB 1034 Ought to Pass**.

Sincerely,

Debrah Howes

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President, AFT-New Hampshire

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[i] https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC2759797/
[ii] https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5993409/#bib6
[iii] https://giffords.org/analysis/gun-law-trendwatch-the-danger-of-arming-teachers/
[iv] https://everytownsupportfund.org/press/new-everytown-report-confirms-arming-teachers-is-not-effective-for-preventing-school-shootings/
[v] https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5993415/
[vi] https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA243-9.html
[vii] Everytown Support Fund
[viii] https://giffords.org/analysis/gun-law-trendwatch-the-danger-of-arming-teachers/
[ix] https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5993409/
[x] https://www.acluwv.org/news/four-reasons-why-arming-schoolteachers-wont-make-schools-safer/
[xi] https://www.aft.org/press-release/under-siege-survey-teachers-finds-34-point-increase-job-dissatisfaction
[xii] Everytown Support Fund