

March 5, 2014

Dear Senator Coghill,

Thank you in advance for reading my letter. As you know, I am the Director/CEO of Kenai Peninsula College, a community campus system of the University of Alaska Anchorage. I am taking this opportunity to weigh in on SB 176 and provide you my thoughts as to why I do not support this bill or its companion, HB 335.

In order to provide context to my comments, I believe you should know the following about my background. I was raised in a family that used guns for hunting and shot my first squirrel when I was six years old. Since that time, I have hunted across many states for big and small game and have been quite successful in my pursuits. I also on occasion shoot trap and visit a target shooting range. I presently own four rifles, three shotguns and three handguns. I've been a NRA member for about 30 years and when Alaska required people to take the concealed carry course, I took and passed the program. While in the Air Force, I was an expert marksman.

I have raised my son as I was raised, teaching him how to handle a firearm safely and how to hunt. He too, has been quite a successful hunter and marksman. He now has two sons and we will soon be teaching them in the same tradition.

As the director of a college with almost 3,000 students enrolled each semester, I cannot support either the open or concealed carry of weapons on University of Alaska campuses. Over the last few weeks, I have heard from a number of faculty and staff who say they will either retire or resign. Why? Because they feel they will be in potential danger each time they come to one of our campuses.

Each semester, KPC has 100-140 high school students taking our regular college level courses for dual credit. KPC is fortunate that the Kenai Peninsula Borough helps to fund a program called JumpStart that enables high school seniors to take up to 18 credits their senior year and only pay \$53/credit vs. the regular price of \$168/credit. We hope to offer this program to juniors next year and the school district will consider possibly bussing these students to our Kenai River Campus twice daily. I expect this will double the number of high school students being on our campus during the fall and spring semesters.

This does not account for all the other high school and younger students we have on campus throughout the year. Just today I welcomed 20 students from Seldovia who are on the Peninsula for a basketball tournament; they stayed in our new residence hall last night and got a tour and briefings about college life today. In April more than 100 high school students from across our region will be on campus for an orientation to college with a number of them staying in our dorm.

Weapons are not permitted on K-12 premises and they should not be allowed on UA campuses for the same and even more reasons.

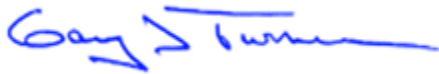
It's possible your committee might not receive a lot of public comments opposed to your bill, but understand the following as a very possible reason: Alaska prides itself on being a pro-gun state, having a last frontier mentality and defending our families and friends from humans and animals in defense of life or property, so going against this bill can be perceived as being against motherhood and apple pie. Some of my faculty and staff have said they fear retribution or ridicule if they go on the record opposing the bills.

One of our faculty members did submit a letter to you and she summed it up well: *"This would do nothing to make me feel safer. It also would make it impossible for me to shoulder responsibility for the safety of those in my class. The effect would be quite the opposite, by putting 'authority' in the hands of those carrying guns regardless of their maturity, stability, or current frame of mind."*

You are likely aware the university has posted a position paper about these two bills at <http://www.alaska.edu/files/state/UA-Position-SB176-HB335-3-4-14-FINAL-.pdf> I fully support these points and being at the ground level where students are in seats and filling our halls, I know of the great potential for harm if SB 176 or HB 355 is passed.

I enjoyed our time while we both served on the Select Committee for Legislative Ethics and during our many deliberations over ethics issues over the years; we were virtually always in agreement. I'm saddened that we are not in agreement over this very serious issue that will negatively change the face of postsecondary education in our state forever.

Sincerely,



Gary J. Turner
Director/CEO
Kenai Peninsula College