

March 12, 2014

Senator Coghill and Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am writing today in strong opposition to SB176/HB335 for multiple reasons. I am first and foremost a single mother of three children who works fulltime, will graduate from college this spring. I am also a strong advocate for education and am highly active within our community.

This hasn't always been the case. A few short years ago, I was the victim of domestic violence on many levels. The perpetrator was raised with guns, was a highly skilled trap shooter, and owned a vast amount of guns, knives and other weapons. He decided to divorce and insisted that I leave my home and my children behind. I chose to leave the situation taking the children with me. We tried the women's shelter and other agencies for assistance to no avail as they were all full. I managed to secure an apartment and a job, and proceeded to move on. Ultimately my then 4yr old daughter was not returned from a visitation with her father. She was only returned home after four weeks by her grandmother and countless hours of bullying and badgering of unimaginable proportions by her father.

During the court proceedings there was a video played that showed this man, the 40-year-old father of my child with a group of 4-5 men, all with guns waiting for me to show up. What they had in store was all on the audio to the video and would send chills up and down your spine. Sitting in court watching this video, and knowing that there was not a thing that could be done unless someone was harmed was the most horrible feeling. I had never considered that this highly trained experienced individual could become this dangerous until I actually witnessed it with my own eyes. The court system was of the opinion that with "no blood" there was "no foul" and there was nothing I could do until someone was actually injured. This led to many sleepless nights. I was raised with guns, hunting, fishing and many gun related activities and am actually a pretty good shot. I was never uneasy around guns; they had a purpose and a space in my outdoor lifestyle. However, speaking out publically on this treatment could mean more of this treatment, a feeling that is terrifying to say the least. However, I am willing to take the risks now because the child involved is now over 18 and the risks are less and it is the right thing to do.

I do know that if a well- trained individual can perpetrate this kind of action during a divorce when tensions are high, there is the potential for others less trained to do the same, or worse, in a high stress environment. The college/university experience is rife with stress and pressure coming from all directions including but not limited to classes, examinations, personal and university funding, conflicts in personal relationships amongst students as well and those between students and educators, and the stresses of daily living. I strongly oppose SB176/HB335 because adding guns to a high stress environment, especially with conceal carry permits that are often granted with less time/effort than I would put forth on a test in an undergraduate level class, can create a potential for tragedy that is unfathomable. There are many women/men that have been threatened by highly trained, permit carrying individuals. The situation is thus: in any given stressful situation people do not always adhere to their training. I have witnessed this on many occasions and in many stressful situations. I do not believe

that SB176/HB335 will create an environment of safety. The university experience provides education and discussion that encourages the development of critical thinking skills that allow individuals to make wise decisions in situations that are highly charged with emotion and stress this is a place of gaining experience. Laws and training themselves don't always guarantee safety and people doing the right thing.

My concern is this, if the person that perpetrated this violence within my own family had been less experienced both in training and in life situations, this situation would have escalated. I realize that this is just one person and one incident that fortunately ended well, quite possibly because I was able to keep my head and not just grab a weapon and take action, but I do not believe that it is an isolated situation. One incident and one person can have horrifying consequences to many people, and I firmly believe that the entity responsible for providing security and the main users of the facilities should be able to enforce this at their discretion, just as smoking policies are in place today in many Alaska buildings.

Smoking is legal if you are of age. However any entity business or government is able to ask and post that there is no smoking within their places of operation. I fully believe that it is within the University's and other community members' rights to demand that behaviors that are potentially a risk to others not be allowed. There is a time and a place for everything. While guns have use and purpose, concealed carrying them on campus is not their place.

Thank you for your time,

Shauna Thornton