



The Honorable Shelley Hughes
Chair Community and Regional Affairs
Juneau, AK 99801

May 12, 2021

RE: SB 136 – Limitations on Firearms Restrictions

Dear Chair Hughes and Members of the Senate Community and Regional Affairs Committee,

On behalf of Everytown for Gun Safety and the Alaska chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, I am writing in opposition to Senate Bill 136 (limitations on firearms restrictions).

Alaska already has a preemption law that prevents local authorities from overriding the state policy. This bill is an unnecessary narrowing of that law, and is aimed squarely at stopping schools and other entities from protecting against gun violence.

SB 136 seeks to restrict schools and municipalities from regulating firearms, including preventing schools or localities from prohibiting guns on campus and preventing local authorities from regulating whether a domestic abuser or a person at risk for suicide should no longer have access to firearms. The bill would also punish any university or locality who chooses to regulate firearms by requiring the entity to pay high damages, working to intimidate and punish those who attempt to reduce gun violence through local law.

Firearm preemption laws block local governments from adopting reasonable gun laws tailored to local conditions. SB 136 would prevent local mayors and police chiefs — the officials best suited to understand local crime and how to address it — from passing common-sense public safety measures designed to keep their communities safe. It would lead to dangerous and illogical results, such as allowing a city to keep weapons out of courtrooms or daycares, but forcing the same city to allow guns in other sensitive places.

Finally, and most seriously, SB 136 would prohibit public universities from setting campus firearm policy. Guns have no place on college campuses, and state legislators shouldn't make colleges less safe by limiting the authority of a university to keep its students safe.

Colleges and universities are already relatively safe from violence. Everytown for Gun Safety's tracking of incidents of gunfire on school grounds found an average of 10 gun homicides¹ occur

¹ "The Danger of Guns on Campus." *Everytown Research & Policy*, 2020, available at: <https://everytownresearch.org/report/guns-on-campus/>

on college campuses each year, while almost 20 million students² attend colleges or universities. Furthermore, research has shown³ that guns on campus are likely to lead to more firearm-related deaths and injuries, and that they are unlikely to prevent mass shootings on campus.

However, allowing guns on campus increases the risk of gun suicide for students, and Alaska already has one of the highest rates⁴ of youth firearm suicide in the country. A study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that a quarter of young adults (ages 18–24) have contemplated suicide during the pandemic.⁵ Access to firearms increases the risk of suicide by three times.⁶ Allowing easy access to firearms for students on college campuses is risky, dangerous, and could cost taxpayers millions of dollars per year in added security costs. In 2014, after Idaho passed legislation that forced colleges to allow people to carry guns on campus, five state schools had to request more than \$3.7 million from the state to increase security in the first year alone.⁷ And in West Virginia, a guns-on-campus bill proposed in 2019 was estimated to cost more than \$11 million dollars to implement.⁸

We urge you to consider the serious consequences SB 136 presents for the safety of Alaskans, especially Alaskan university students, and vote no on this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on SB 136.

Respectfully,
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² Analysis of Everytown for Gun Safety's Gunfire on School Grounds in the United States database, total gun homicide victims, excluding the shooter, on the grounds of colleges or universities between 2015 and 2019. For more information visit <https://everytownresearch.org/gunfire-in-school/>; US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "Digest of Education Statistics, 2019, Table 105.30: Enrollment in Elementary, Secondary, and Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions, by Level and Control of Institution: Selected Years, 1869-70 through Fall 2029," December 2019, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_105.30.asp.

³ Daniel W. Webster et al., "Firearms on College Campuses: Research Evidence and Policy Implications," Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, October 15, 2016, https://nccpsafety.org/assets/files/library/Firearms_on_College_Campuses.pdf

⁴ "The Rise of Firearm Suicide Among Young Americans." *Everytown Research & Policy*, 2021, available at: <https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-rise-of-firearm-suicide-among-young-americans/#strong-firearm-suicide-affects-us-all-strong>

⁵ Mark É Czeisler et al., "Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation During the COVID-19 Pandemic—United States, June 24–30, 2020," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 69, no. 32 (August 14, 2020): 1049–57, <https://doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6932a1>.

⁶ Anglemyer A, Horvath T, Rutherford G. The accessibility of firearms and risk for suicide and homicide victimization among household members: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Annals of Internal Medicine*. 2014;160:101–110.

⁷ Campus Safety Magazine, "Concealed Carry Law Costs Idaho Colleges \$3.7M", February 5, 2015, available at: https://www.campussafetymagazine.com/news/conceal_carry_law_costs_idaho_colleges_3-7m/

⁸ "West Virginia Senate committee rejects bill to allow concealed carry on campus", WHSV News, March 6, 2019, available at:

<https://www.whsv.com/content/news/Bill-to-allow-concealed-carry-on-West-Virginia-campuses-fails-506767451.html>