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Rev. Sarah Oglesby-Dunegan, Board Chair  
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**Testimony in Opposition to HB 2042, Conceal Carry Reciprocity  
Senate Fed and State Committee, Sen. Bud Estes, chair  
February 13, 2018**

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee -

Kansas Interfaith Action is a statewide, multi-faith issue-advocacy organization that “puts faith into action” by organizing, educating, and advocating on behalf of people of faith and conscience on important social, economic, and climate justice issues. We rise today in opposition to HB 2042, which, if passed as amended in the House, would expand concealed-carry on college campuses to include 18-20 year olds.

The clergy and congregations that make up Kansas Interfaith Action are greatly concerned about the changes in gun laws in this state over the past 10 years. Today, Kansas barely have any such laws at all. The arguments on which these changes have been based are specious and ideological. We can see the results of such laws in the increased level of gun violence throughout our country. As public health experts will tell you, it is far more likely that a gun will be used on one's self or on an acquaintance than on an assailant. As law enforcement will tell you, despite the mythology, more guns do not equal more safety.

And as people of faith will tell you, the proliferation of guns in our state and society is contrary to the call in our sacred literature to “seek peace and pursue it.” The statements of the main denominational bodies decry the rising incidence of gun violence in society and urge legislative action to address it. For example, the United Methodist Church's Book of Resolutions says,

No appeals to individual autonomy are sufficient to justify our church's ignorance of this threat [of gun violence]. The need to prevent the incidence of firearm-related injury and death is an issue of increasing concern and a priority public health issue. The United Methodist Church is among those religious communions calling for social policies and personal lifestyles that bring an end to senseless gun violence.

The action-item section of the resolution calls for “the development of advocacy groups within local congregations to advocate for the eventual reduction of the availability of guns in society.”

Every mainline Christian denomination, the Unitarian Universalist Association, and the denominational arms of the Jewish community all have similar statements. The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism is representative of these bodies in its call for such measures as universal background checks and increased access to mental health services. These measures, and not more and easier access to guns, are the answers to the epidemic of gun violence in our society.

Last year, Kansas Interfaith Action testified and organized in support of continuing the exemption of state college and university campuses from so-called “campus carry.” This policy was imposed by the legislature on campuses against the overwhelming wishes of their communities – students, faculty, staff and parents. Unfortunately we were not successful. But HB 2042 bill would make the situation significantly worse by greatly expanding campus carry, including in dorms.

Even though 18-20 year olds would be required, for now, to be permitted, we do not believe that the modest training required for a concealed carry permit in Kansas would sufficiently address the underlying issue, which is that 18 year old college students are simply not mature enough to have unrestricted access to guns. Many are away from home for the first time, and they are faced with many emotional, intellectual and social challenges. Alcohol and other drugs can also be involved.

College is a time when assumptions are challenged, when we rub shoulders with the kinds of people whom we may never have met before, when we learn new and difficult ideas. The guidelines put out by the University of Texas warned professors against speaking about controversial issues, lest someone take deadly offense. That's not the kind of open atmosphere we want at our colleges and universities.

We require young people to be 21 and over to use alcohol. Some cities are moving to require people to be 21 to use tobacco. Yet this legislation would force our universities to allow 18 year olds, with a minimum of training, to bring guns anywhere and everywhere on campus, endangering the life and well-being of themselves and those they come into contact with. It compounds the damage done to our institutions of higher education by this legislature in its previous imposition of concealed carry on campus. It is dangerous and short-sighted.

We urge you to vote no on HB 2042.

Thank you.