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Testimony in Opposition to HB 2059 – Concealed Carry Reciprocity
House Fed & State Affairs Committee, Rep. John Barker, chair
January 27, 2021

Mr. Chair, members of the Committee:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm Rabbi Moti Rieber, executive director of Kansas Interfaith Action, a statewide, faith-based advocacy organization, here to oppose HB 2059.

HB 2059 would allow teenagers from outside of Kansas to carry hidden, loaded handguns in our state.

Under current Kansas law, 18-, 19-, and 20-year-olds cannot legally carry hidden, loaded handguns in public. But the gun lobby is pushing a dangerous proposal to allow teenagers to obtain permits to carry concealed handguns throughout the state.

There's a reason 18–21-year-olds are restricted from carrying guns: this group is more prone to risk-taking behaviors with their pre-frontal cortex -- the decision-making, risk-assessment center -- is less developed than their limbic system, the emotional center. That's the reason why 18-, 19-, and 20-year-olds commit gun homicides at a rate nearly four times higher than adults 21 and older. About 38 percent of all suicides by people under 21 are committed with a gun. Because guns are far more effective than any other method, reducing access to guns for young people can reduce the number of suicides. The three leading causes of death among young people are unintentional injury, suicide and homicide. Guns play a role in each.¹

Some years ago, when we were arguing about the bill that allowed guns on Kansas' college campuses, the gun lobby argued that only those 21 and over would be allowed to carry on campus. That reasoning would disappear with this bill. This bill unquestionably would make our college and university campuses more dangerous.

It seems clear to me that HB 2059 is intended to serve as a backdoor of lowering the concealed carry age in Kansas. Once this bill is passed, we'll be back here to change the carry age to 18 for Kansans as well, under the argument that this law makes our own 18-year-olds second class citizens. Not only does this bill continue to make a bad problem worse -- it promises worse to come.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, we should be treating gun violence as the public health crisis that it is. We should not subject our young people, or our state, to social experimentation based on a misguided and deadly ideology. Let's stop this failed experiment before it goes further. Please vote down HB 2059.

Thank you for your attention.

¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/01/06/there-a-simple-way-to-fight-mass-shootings-raise-the-gun-age/>