



Senate Judiciary Committee

April 14, 2026

HB 1793-FN, an act prohibiting public colleges and universities from regulating the possession or carrying of firearms and non-lethal weapons on campus.

Testimony of Elizabeth Chilton, President – University of New Hampshire;
Don Birx, President – Keene State College & Plymouth State University;
Mark Collopy, Interim Chief – University of New Hampshire Police Department

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on behalf of the University System of New Hampshire in opposition to HB 1793-FN.

For many years, each institution within the University System of New Hampshire has prohibited the carrying of firearms on campus under authority granted by the Legislature to the USNH Board of Trustees to manage campus operations and safety. We believe those policies have served our campuses well. New Hampshire has some of the safest college campuses in the country, and there is no evidence to suggest that HB 1793 would make them safer. Instead, this legislation would prohibit the University System from exercising even basic judgment about how to manage firearms in complex campus environments.

In fact, research from states that have adopted campus carry¹ has found increased fear of crime, lower perceptions of campus safety², and reduced confidence in campus police. Perceptions of well-being and safety matter greatly on a residential college campus and the towns where they are located. Our universities are not only places where students learn, but where they live and, together with our faculty and staff, work and build community. A policy that increases anxiety and undermines the sense of security felt by students, faculty, and staff undermines our ability to recruit and retain students, faculty, and staff. Based on student surveys, resolutions from our faculty, community discussions, and

¹ McMahon-Howard, J., Scherer, H. L., & McCafferty, J. T. (2021). Examining the Effects of Passing a Campus Carry Law: Comparing Campus Safety Before and After Georgia's New Campus Carry Law. *Journal of School Violence*, 20(4), 430–444. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2021.1930016>

² Kagawa, R. M. C., Reeping, P. M., & Laqueur, H. S. (2025). Effects of implementing permissive campus carry laws on rates of major violence at public colleges and universities. *Injury epidemiology*, 12(1), 14. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40621-025-00566-0>



direct email outreach, I can confidently say that these concerns are shared broadly across our campuses and contribute to the widespread opposition to this legislation among our communities.

As passed by the House, HB 1793 would remove virtually all authority from the Board of Trustees and university leaders to regulate firearms on campus. It would not allow institutions to make decisions about safe storage in residence halls, about limiting firearms in sensitive settings such as large event venues, areas serving minors, or disciplinary proceedings, or about whether permitted carry must be concealed rather than open. This sweeping approach would make New Hampshire unique among campus-carry states and leave our institutions with almost no tools to manage safety and operations responsibly.

The bill also poses operational challenges for campus law enforcement and emergency response. In a fast-moving crisis, the presence of multiple armed individuals can complicate threat assessment and response. It also heightens concerns related to mental health and student well-being. College campuses are environments where young adults may experience periods of acute stress, crisis, or impaired judgment, including situations involving alcohol. If institutions are denied meaningful authority to regulate storage or restrict access in residential settings, we run the very real risk of firearms being readily available at unsafe times, with potentially tragic consequences.

State law entrusts the University System's Board of Trustees with the management and control of university property and affairs. HB 1793 would override that authority in a sweeping manner and leave institutions unable to address obvious safety and operational concerns and undermine the sense of safety and community that is an important consideration for prospective students and their families in making college decisions. For those reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to find HB 1793-FN inexpedient to legislate.