



Members of the West Virginia Legislature:

As presidents of public, four-year higher education institutions in West Virginia, we write to express our deep concern over Senate Bill 10, which would allow for the concealed carry of firearms on our college campuses.

We strongly support the second amendment and the right for law abiding citizens to own firearms, but have serious reservations about the significant public safety challenges and financial burdens that Senate Bill 10 would impose on West Virginia's regional colleges and universities.

As a result of the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, all institutions of higher education are seeing more and more students grappling with mental health challenges and in need of additional support services. Introducing firearms into this already challenging environment could have unintended consequences. Research demonstrates that ready access to firearms substantially increases suicide risks, especially among young adults, and firearms are the most common method of lethal self-harm. Moreover, when similar legislation was advanced in the past, it was overwhelmingly opposed by university faculty, staff, students, parents and alumni at all of our public institutions out of concern that the introduction of firearms on campus could stifle the free exchange of ideas and create a climate of fear and intimidation.

At our institutions, the safety and security of our students, faculty, and staff is of paramount concern. If enacted, this legislation would require our universities to make significant new investments in our public safety and security operations, to include the addition of new law enforcement personnel, equipment, and infrastructure to ensure compliance with the intent of this legislation and to safeguard the security of our campus community.

It has been estimated that it could cost the state's colleges and universities up to \$11.6 million in the first full year of a campus carry bill's implementation to install additional safeguards and security measures for athletic events and academic spaces and for additionally needed safety personnel. As under resourced institutions that continue to adapt to the economic challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, we simply do not have the financial resources to implement and administer the requirements of Senate Bill 10.

We respect the legislature's lawmaking authority, and its responsibility to be responsive to the will of West Virginia's citizens. As leaders of the state's regional colleges and universities, we urge you to fully consider the direct and indirect financial burdens and public safety impacts inherent to Senate Bill 10.

Thank you.

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