

My name is Sean Sheridan and I'm submitting these comments representing myself. Thank you, committee members, for accepting my written testimony. I have included a few summarizing bullet points at the end of this submission. Please feel free to examine those once you have finished reading my statement.

I've been an employee of Dallas Independent School District for eight years and have been working in North Texas area schools for a decade. I also have a daughter attending elementary school who I love and cherish more than anything. For these reasons among others, school safety is extremely important to me because there's nothing more important to me than my little girl's safety and my ability to keep coming home to her at the end of the day.

Speaking directly to the workforce needs of the state regarding school safety, the many options, both suggested and currently in law, all have their merits and demerits but all but one have a monetary cost and administrative overhead associated with them. The one cost-free and administration-free option, and the one that I personally support the most, is removing the restriction on LTC holders from carrying concealed in K-12 schools and prohibiting public school districts from barring their employees from carrying concealed while on the job. In fact, I have drafted a bill to do exactly that and any legislator who would be willing to file it may contact me for a copy.

In contrast to this option, both the School Marshal and the Guardian programs require several costs, not only per person but per district unrelated to the individuals participating. The required training classes, from what I can find, can cost up to \$6,000 dollars per staff member, not including the cost of lock boxes or firearms and ammunition for those districts that provide them. Those districts that pay the cost of the training may be discouraged from increasing the number of armed persons, or other districts may be discouraged from paying the training costs at all, leaving it to the applicants. And in both programs, the participants must be selected and kept track of by district administrators, costing man hours or productivity in the case of administrators whose roles are not solely the administration of the Marshal or Guardian plan. Lifting the ban on armed self-defense has none of these costs.

Hiring school resource officers and armed guards costs even more. No school district that I'm aware of in the state of Texas employs a dedicated school resource officer or armed guard at every single school in their district because of the cost of doing so. And having such personnel does not guarantee they will act in time, or at all, to stop a shooting and save lives. No one is going to fight harder to end a deadly threat than the people directly in its path, as the victims at Columbine and Parkland discovered after waiting for help that never came.

We know most casualties in a mass violence event happen in the first minute and there isn't a police force on the planet that can respond that fast. That is why we need to be able to respond personally in that moment. And by we, I mean everyone. If you can carry at the grocery store, the playground, a movie theater, or the intensely crowded state fair, there's no excuse for not being able to carry at your child's school, at an after school event, or in the district in which you work, whether you're a teacher or a visitor or the janitor.

Both the School Marshal program and the Guardian program have another major flaw. They still leave the decision of who and how many people can be armed to defend themselves up to the district, which in many districts is none, regardless of how many staff members in that district would be interested. My district, for example, does not participate at all in the program and neither does my daughter's. Personally I want to be able to be armed while at work for my own defense and those immediately around me, and a number of other people I've spoken to in the district would as well, but as long as it's left up to the board, it's not going to happen. And even if they did implement one of these programs, there's no guarantee, due to budgetary or administrative concerns or limits on the number of participants allowed, that they would allow me to participate, leaving me at the mercy of hoping someone else comes to my rescue when I would otherwise have been perfectly capable of protecting myself.

I'm also dismayed to know my daughter's elementary school has no armed presence to speak of because they've chosen not to "opt in" to either of these programs. They also sent out an email last year saying they can't afford to put an SRO at every school, so some, including my daughter's, will just go without. Even if they had guards or SROs, they don't walk everyone to their cars and may not be present at after school events.

As an employee at a large, metropolitan public school district, every day that I go to work I have to disarm before leaving my car, leaving me defenseless throughout the day and leaving my firearm unattended in the parking lot, a parking lot which has a history of vehicle break-ins and burglaries, by the way. Obviously, a firearm can't be stolen out of a car if it's being carried on one's person at all times.

This is not a new idea. Four states have been allowing license holders to carry concealed in K-12 schools for many years without any casualties or problems arising from allowing people to carry like they do safely and responsibly everywhere else. What if a student grabs the gun? It hasn't happened. What if a teacher goes nuts and shoots his students? It hasn't happened. How will this affect the learning environment? It hasn't.

This is a decades long success story that Texas should adopt and I want to thank Senator Hall for having the courage to file the school safety bill I'm advocating during the last regular session. I hope the rest of you, as well as my legislators, Angela Paxton and Candy Noble, will have the courage to stand for our right to self preservation and do the same in the coming session.

Regarding some of the invited testimony:

The invited testimony of Mark Barden of Sandy Hook Promise suggested enforcing background check mandates on stranger to stranger purchases as a way to prevent mass shootings, but such purchases have never been a factor in mass shooters acquiring firearms. Every mass shooter who legally purchased their firearms passed a background check to do so. And every mass shooter who obtained their firearms without a background check did so by either stealing their firearms, as in the Sandy Hook shooting, or illegally enlisting the help of a straw purchaser, as was the case for some of the firearms used in the Columbine shooting.

The invited testimony of Dr. Jeff Temple of the Center for Violence Prevention referred to a study he conducted, suggesting "individuals who had access to guns, compared to those with no such access, were over 18 times more likely to have threatened someone with a gun." However, his study was a self-selected survey given only to high school teenagers and out of the 1,042 teens who responded to the survey, the number of teens who had threatened someone with a gun was only 16. This suggests that the findings of his study cannot simply be generalized to the population as a whole, since people in general exhibit less criminal, impulsive, and dangerous behavior as they age, which is to say nothing of suggesting that specific patterns of behavior would apply to all people in general based entirely on a sample of only sixteen people.

Instead, the decades of annual statistics of CHL and LTC holders available on the Texas Department of Public Safety website shows that those who choose to lawfully carry firearms are much less likely to commit crimes than the general population. They are the safest, most responsible, most law-abiding people you can empirically find.

Costs associated with mentioned programs:

- School Marshal/Guardian: As high as \$6,000 per person training, gun costs, ammo costs, lock box costs, program administration costs. Board may say the district won't participate even if employees want to.
- SRO: Average salary ~\$50,000 plus benefits and administrative costs. Most schools don't have an SRO and those that do may not protect after school events. May just stand outside while children are being shot.
- LTC holders: \$0
- Number of states allowing license holders to carry in K-12 schools: 4
- Number of casualties from license holders in schools in those states: 0

12 REASONS

TO ALLOW LICENSED CONCEALED CARRY IN SCHOOLS

1. **Texans want the right to take personal responsibility for their own defense.**
2. **Multiple studies show reductions in violent crimes** and crimes in general where concealed carry has been allowed. ^{1, 2, 3, 4}
3. A recent examination of FBI reports on active shooter events revealed that **when regular armed citizens have been present, they reduced injuries and fatalities 94% of the time** and stopping the event altogether 75% of the time with **0 innocent bystanders shot by accident.**⁵
4. The Crime Prevention Research Center has found **more than 97% of mass public shootings occur in gun free zones.** ⁶
5. **Citizens with a License To Carry (LTC) have been shown to be the most law abiding and responsible segment of the population** in every state that keeps records of convictions and license revocations, including the Texas Department of Public Safety and have been shown in Texas to be more law abiding per-capita than even police. ^{7, 8}
6. **No one will fight harder to end a threat than the people in immediate danger.**
7. **Police and security have to come from somewhere else** after being told something is happening. **The real first responders are the people already there.**
8. While active shooter training is desirable for those who are tasked with pursuing and engaging a shooter, **gun owners with no training and license holders with no more training than mandated by their state successfully defend themselves every day** in the US and tactical training, including clearing rooms and hallways, is not needed for people who are not going looking for a shooter but merely defending themselves in place if a shooter finds them.^{9, 10, 11}
9. **School shooters are not the only reason to allow concealed carry** of defensive weapons. Parents, teachers, and staff all come to schools and district buildings from somewhere else and many use public transit or walk. **Security does not walk everyone to their cars** once they leave the building and they certainly **don't provide escorts when walking or taking a bus or train to or from their home.**
10. Allowing LTC holders to carry in schools and district administrative buildings **costs absolutely zero.** No budget amendments or allocations of funds are necessary.
11. Allowing LTC holders to carry in schools and district administrative buildings **does not prevent, impede, delay, or interfere with the implementation of any other security measures.**

12. **Four states allow license holders to carry in K-12 schools** (Utah, Oregon, Alabama, New Hampshire) and many others allow school districts to set their own policies with hundreds doing so. No increases in crimes in schools have been attributed to these laws and policies and **there have been no injuries as a result.**¹²

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