

Hello,

I'm Jenny Williams. This is the testimony I wrote and am submitting for the hearing on the 19th of July.

I'm Jenny Williams and I'm fourteen years old, I am a strong supporter of gun control and wholeheartedly oppose the HB178 bill. In our country, gun violence is an epidemic that kills thousands of children and adults every year. It happens in our schools, places of worship, malls, concerts, and anywhere you could imagine where you are just trying to live your everyday life. It has made our children grow up afraid and wondering if they're the next victim of this epidemic. My generation has been prepared to deal with a possible mass shooting in our schools through lockdown drills every month. Where we huddle in the corner of our dark classroom, completely silent until our teacher announces we can resume our daily activities.

My first lockdown drill took place in second grade. My teacher sat us down on our colorful carpet and began to give a group of seven and eight-year-olds a talk about what would happen if someone came into our school with a gun. We listened intently as for some of the first times in our lives we had to understand that life wasn't all rainbows and grasp the fact that someone could come into our safe space, school and hurt us. The discussion began seriously with our teacher explaining what we do during a drill, and a possible real situation. She promised that she would protect us however she could, and answered every what-if scenario honestly. But soon, this conversation became less serious, and our what-if scenarios more ridiculous. This wasn't because we found the topic funny, but because it was the only way our young minds could cope with the idea that we might not always be safe in school. From there I lived through many years of lockdown drills, never giving them a second thought and believed it was always like this and there was nothing I could do about it.

When I entered seventh grade that changed. I began to read the news more and became more educated about the world around us and the current political climate. Soon my discussions with my friends during free time diverged from school and sports to conversations about sexism, racism, gun violence, the environment, etc. Then the Parkland school shooting occurred. It was the first big, publicized school shooting I could remember being aware of. That's when my friend and I, in support of March For Our Lives, held a school walkout, where we honored the lives that were lost and made a statement about gun violence and the importance of gun control. Then in October of eighth grade our middle school director gathered us all in a room to talk about the Tree of Life shooting. He gave an emotional speech about how he grew up there, it was a second home and he cherished the memories he made there. He talked about how important it is that we recognize this issue. At the end of this me and my friend, Ela was so emotional that we couldn't return to class for about an hour.

I understand my story is not unique or the worst there is. I am not the only child who grew up doing lockdown drills, who had to accept the fact that someone with a gun could come to my school and kill me, and who had to stand up for gun control when her government failed to protect her generation. I don't want this to be the reality that younger generations have to deal with. If this bill is passed it will make it easier for gun violence to enter our safe spaces. It will not protect our children but hurt them. We can see this with Alaska who passed a permitless carry bill in 2003, and since then aggravated assaults committed with a firearm have risen by 82%. Arizona also passed a similar bill in 2010, and from 2010 to 2017 aggravated assaults committed with firearms have risen 39%. Through these examples, we can see that permitless carry bills have hurt our citizens and put more people in danger. As of now, there are over 36000 deaths due to firearms each year, we need to take steps to stop this epidemic. Please oppose this permitless carry bill and protect our citizens by taking a stand against this bill and help stop this epidemic.

Thank you,

Jenny Williams

