



**GRAND VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY**
COLLEGE OF
COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC SERVICE

March 21, 2012

Dear Senator Green:

I am writing today in support of your redrafted SB 59, which would (among other things) eliminate "pistol free zones" for individuals who agree to undergo 9 additional hours of firearms related training beyond the current CPL requirements. I applaud your efforts because I believe that the present regulations, which needlessly restrict concealed carry on college campuses (my place of employment), and in other locations, actually help turn these places into crime-friendly environments.

There are several important reasons why I support your initiative:

"Pistol-free zones" just don't work! The only thing that they accomplish is disarming law-abiding Concealed Pistol Licensees (CPLs) while ensuring that violent criminals (who simply ignore the law) have access to a pool of defenseless victims. There are dozens of cases that illustrate this point (the tragic shootings at the University of Alabama Huntsville, and Chardon High School in Ohio represent recent examples.)

Moreover, while mass shootings are rare (as opponents of CPL will point out), other violent crime is not. Armed robberies, assaults, rapes and even homicides happen on university campuses (and in other "pistol free" locations) every year. **It is a dangerous myth that calling the police is a viable substitute for being prepared to defend oneself.** Despite their best efforts, law enforcement almost never respond quickly enough to "save" crime victims. At best, they arrive after the fact in order to apprehend the offender. Conversely, cases in which CPLs have successfully thwarted violent crime in progress are numerous.

There is no scholarly evidence showing that expanding carry rights on campus (or in other locations presently designated "pistol free") will lead to increased violence. States that have permitted college CPL (e.g. Colorado and Utah) have not experienced increases in campus shootings. This is because CPLs are statistically among the most law-abiding citizens in our society (some data suggest that, as a group, we have lower crime rates than police officers.)

There is little scholarly evidence to suggest that campus suicides or "drunken accidents" will increase if CPL on campus is permitted. As stated earlier, the vast majority of CPLs take their carry privileges extremely seriously, and take great care to store their weapons

safely. Moreover, there are already strict restrictions in place that prohibit CPLs from carrying while drinking. Consequently, these concerns, like most arguments in opposition to concealed carry, are simply driven by a "fear of the unknown," which brings me to my concluding argument:

Fear is an extremely poor basis for criminal justice policy. It leads to ineffective measures that make some people "feel better", but in reality leave all of us **more** vulnerable to crime. **Public policy should be based on facts;** and the facts here suggest that CPLs often use their firearms to thwart crime, but hardly ever abuse their right to carry.

Referring specifically to carry on college campuses: if people want to keep classrooms and dormitories "pistol free" because they're afraid that the presence of guns might place a "chill on the academic environment", the best answer to this concern is education that raises awareness about the safety and effectiveness of CPL. **What we don't need are dangerous, arbitrary laws that benefit criminals while penalizing and endangering responsible, law-abiding citizens.**

If you, or your colleagues in the Senate, have any other questions about this issue, please do not hesitate to contact me at by phone: (616) 331-7132 or e-mail: kierkusc@gvsu.edu.

Respectfully yours,

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