



## **of Nebraska**

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### **Judiciary Committee Written Testimony for LB 516**

Chairman Ashford and members of the Judiciary Committee. The Arc of Nebraska is a support and advocacy organization with and for people with developmental disabilities. We are a state-affiliated chapter of The Arc of the United States. The Arc of Nebraska is a statewide organization with 17 local chapters and approximately 1,500 members across Nebraska.

The Arc of Nebraska strongly opposes LB 516 to authorize the carrying of concealed handguns in educational institutions by security personnel, administrators, or teaching staff.

LB 516 creates a potential for disaster. The current Concealed Handgun Permit Act specifically excludes educational institutions and any events, vehicles, buildings, etc. associated with those institutions as being places where concealed handguns may be present. To rescind this exclusion creates a slippery slope. Where will the line be drawn? Under LB 516 it extends to educational institutions. Should we expect future bills to exclude hospitals (which were added to the list of exclusions in 2006), places of worship, etc. to be the next in line? If so, why have any exceptions? Surely the intent of the exceptions was that these were places where people were to feel safe.

Secondly, LB 516 does little more than to permit the carrying of these guns in schools. Where are the safeguards to ensure that these guns don't end up in the wrong hands? While the carrier may do everything by the book in terms of storage, safety measures, etc., we should be naive to think that the gun may not end up in the hands of someone (for example a student) who will not comply with the restrictions in Nebraska's concealed handgun law.

Moreover, we are very concerned that these weapons will be drawn on students. We are all aware of tragic school shootings that have taken place across the nation. As a state we are also not immune from that happening here. However, we are not confident that LB 516 would do anything to prevent school shootings. Would school personnel even have time to acquire a properly stowed, unloaded, concealed weapon? Further, what would alert personnel that a weapon might be necessary?

We are familiar with situations in which students who may engage in behaviors that defy an individual authority figure's (e.g. teacher, administrator) rationale, and could be misperceived by that individual or other observer as dangerous or threatening. Students with intellectual disabilities at times have difficulty expressing themselves through verbal language skills. Instead, expression of frustration or dissatisfaction with a situation, person, or oneself is expressed through physical actions or behaviors. To a teacher or administrator who only has occasional (if any) contact with a student with an intellectual disability, some of the behaviors used to communicate can be misconstrued. It is the responsibility of school personnel to find a way to understand the student's communication skills. School professionals must model, shape, guide, and foster socially acceptable responses to situations; not react with gunfire.

43 states have legislation banning guns from schools. Schools adopt Zero Tolerance policies for weapons among students. Only one school district in Texas has adopted legislation similar to LB 516. This is not enough to be influential.

Given our grave concerns about the safety of students and the questions this bill raises, we recommend that LB 516 not pass out of committee.