

KNOW YOUR IX

Empowering students to stop sexual violence

Memorandum

To: The Georgia State Legislature
From: Know Your IX
Date: February 22, 2016
Re: House Bill 859, which will endanger students, particularly students in abusive relationships

Dear Georgia General Assembly members:

As an organization that works directly with students who have suffered sexual and dating violence on campus, we write to oppose House Bill 859. The bill, which would allow students to carry loaded firearms on college campuses, would increase violence, particularly against women and other marginalized students.

Sexual and dating violence is pervasive on college campuses: One in five women will be sexually assaulted while in college¹ and 32 percent of female students report having been abused by a dating partner.² Allowing campus carry would put guns in the hands of potential or repeat perpetrators. Guns are the most common weapons used in the murders of intimate partners,³ and students who carry weapons on campus are more likely to be perpetrators of physical and sexual violence at college than those who do not.⁴ The widespread use of alcohol and other drugs on college campuses would compound the danger of gun carriers to potential victims and unwitting bystanders.

In Georgia, domestic violence homicide by firearm is particularly rampant: the state ranks ninth in the nation in its rate of men killing women in single-victim homicides,⁵ and guns are by far the leading cause of death in Georgia domestic violence fatalities.⁶ Further, Georgia ranks *highest* in the nation in teen dating violence,⁷ and the majority of relationships ending in homicide begin when victims are in their high school or early

¹ See LYNN LANGTON & SOFI SINOZICH, U.S. DEP'T OF JUSTICE, RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIMIZATION AMONG COLLEGE-AGED FEMALES, 1995-2013 (Dec. 2014), <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/rsavcaf9513.pdf>.

² See generally CHRISTINE SELLERS & MAX BROMLEY, VIOLENT BEHAVIOR IN COLLEGE STUDENT DATING RELATIONSHIPS: IMPLICATIONS FOR CAMPUS SERVICE PROVIDERS, JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY JUSTICE 17 (1996).

³ ARKADI GERNEY & CHELSEA PARSONS, WOMEN UNDER THE GUN: HOW GUN VIOLENCE AFFECTS WOMEN AND 4 POLICY SOLUTIONS TO BETTER PROTECT THEM, Center for American Progress (2014), <http://ampr.gs/1MPkQrp>.

⁴ MATTHEW MILLER, DAVID HEMENWAY & HENRY WECHSLER, GUNS AND GUN THREATS AT COLLEGE, JOURNAL OF AMERICAN COLLEGE HEALTH 50.2 1 (2002), <http://archive.sph.harvard.edu/cas/Documents/Gunthreats2/gunspdf.pdf>.

⁵ VIOLENCE POLICY CENTER, WHEN MEN MURDER WOMEN 9 (Sept. 2014), <http://www.vpc.org/studies/wmmw2014.pdf>.

⁶ GEORGIA COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & THE GEORGIA COMMISSION ON FAMILY VIOLENCE, GEORGIA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FATALITY REVIEW PROJECT 46 (Mar. 17, 2014), <http://gcadv.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/2013-Fatality-Review-Report-Final.pdf> [hereinafter DV Fatality Review].

⁷ See DV Fatality Review, *supra* note 4, at 20.

college years.⁸ In sum, lifting campus gun bans will endanger students—particularly those in abusive relationships—and could cost Georgia students their lives.

Some proponents of these dangerous bills have suggested that allowing students to carry guns would protect them from becoming victims of sexual assault. This could not be further from the truth. Women, as well as people of other genders, are most in danger of suffering sexual violence while in the company of someone they know and trust: Countless studies affirm that the vast majority of campus rapes are perpetrated by the victim's partner, friend, or close acquaintance.⁹ These are precisely the people around whom victims would never think to carry a gun, let alone use one. And the presence of a gun in a case of domestic violence makes it *five times* more likely that the victim will be murdered, regardless of who owns the gun. Though some individual victims might believe that they are safer while carrying a gun, the research is clear: Arming potential victims is not an effective strategy for preventing sexual or dating violence, and actually increases the likelihood that victims or other bystanders will be wounded or killed.

Campus carry legislation is widely regarded as a dangerous approach by experts, and is overwhelmingly opposed by students,¹⁰ Georgia voters,¹¹ university presidents and other higher education officials,¹² campus safety advocates,¹³ and survivors of sexual and dating violence.¹⁴

On behalf of our student members in Georgia and across the country, we urge legislators like you to reject House Bill 859. The lives of Georgia students are at stake.

Sincerely,



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⁸ See DV Fatality Review, *supra* note 4, at 19.

⁹ National Institute of Justice, *Most Victims Know Their Attacker* (Oct. 1, 2008), <http://bit.ly/1PrE9ZC>.

¹⁰ Mark Ransford, *Most Students Don't Want Guns On Their Campuses* (Sept 9, 2013), <http://bit.ly/1mWhryA>.

¹¹ Atlanta Journal Constitution, *Georgia Registered Voter Poll 27* (Jan. 9, 2014),

http://media.cmgdigital.com/shared/news/documents/2014/01/10/30019_GA_Poll_Banner_Table.pdf (noting that 78% of registered Georgia voters oppose allowing students to carry guns on college campuses). See also Jay Bookman, *Georgia Voters Overwhelmingly Oppose Campus Carry*, ATLANTA JOURNAL CONSTITUTION (Jan. 28, 2016), <http://jaybookman.blog.myajc.com/2016/01/28/georgia-voters-overwhelmingly-oppose-campus-carry/>.

¹² Scott Jaschik, *Presidents vs. Guns*, INSIDE HIGHER ED. (Jun. 4, 2014), <http://bit.ly/1SUkAOb>.

¹³ Tara Culp-Ressler, *Why Allowing Concealed Weapons on College Campuses Is Not a Women's Issue*, THINK PROGRESS (Jan. 9, 2013, 9:00AM), <http://bit.ly/1nPzCZx>.

¹⁴ Know Your IX, Petition to Colorado State House et. al., "Don't Vote to Allow Guns on College Campuses," CHANGE.ORG (2015), <http://chn.ge/1TL6aAC>.