



The University of Texas System
Nine Universities. Six Health Institutions. Unlimited Possibilities.

Office of the Chancellor

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January 29, 2015

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor of Texas
State Capitol
Post Office Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711

The Honorable Dan Patrick
Lieutenant Governor of Texas
Post Office Box 12068
Austin, Texas 78711-2068

The Honorable Joe Straus
Texas House of Representatives
Post Office Box 2910
Austin, Texas 78768-2910

Dear Governor Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Patrick, and Speaker Straus:

As the Texas Legislature convenes, it is clear it will consider the important and sensitive issue of concealed handguns on campuses of institutions of higher education. As with my predecessor, I would be remiss in my duties as chancellor of the state's largest university system if I did not convey my concerns regarding this issue, which echo the views expressed by Chancellor Cigarroa in his previous letter on this topic.

I greatly respect and value the authority of the legislature to make this important public policy decision, and I recognize the variety of opinions surrounding it. As chancellor of a system educating over 210,000 students, and with over 90,000 faculty and staff, my utmost concern is their safety.

The University of Texas System has worked diligently to make our campuses safer, through the use of emergency notification systems and other measures. Yet our parents, students, faculty, administrators, and law enforcement all continue to express their concerns that the presence of concealed handguns on campus would contribute to a less-safe environment, not a safer one.

The University of Texas at Arlington

The University of Texas at Austin

The University of Texas at Brownsville

The University of Texas at Dallas

The University of Texas at El Paso

The University of Texas—Pan American

The University of Texas
of the Permian Basin

The University of Texas at San Antonio

The University of Texas at Tyler

The University of Texas
Southwestern Medical Center

The University of Texas
Medical Branch at Galveston

The University of Texas
Health Science Center at Houston

The University of Texas
Health Science Center at San Antonio

The University of Texas
M. D. Anderson Cancer Center

The University of Texas
Health Science Center at Tyler

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Unease has been expressed by our university mental health professionals, who know and deal with the reality of the emotional and psychological pressures on our students of academic life, separation from family, and relationships – all pressures that contribute to the harsh reality that suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students. There is great concern that the presence of handguns, even if limited to licensed individuals age 21 or older, will lead to an increase in both accidental shootings and self-inflicted wounds.

Our university law enforcement personnel, consisting of highly trained professionals who work within these unique campus environments, are particularly troubled about the ability of our officers to differentiate between the bad actor and persons seeking to defend themselves and others when both have guns drawn. Furthermore, the high density of campus housing—which includes both persons of age and persons too young to secure a concealed handgun license—raises issues of how licensed individuals will be able to secure their weapons when not carried on the individual person.

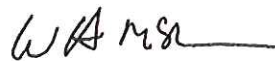
Six of our institutions have significant clinical operations on their campuses, including hospitals and outpatient facilities, and two more are adding medical schools and will soon be home to patients. Many seriously ill and otherwise vulnerable persons find themselves in these health care settings, and strong emotions sometimes flare at times of stress when a person or loved one is ill. We need only look to the recent tragic incident at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston to see this. The presidents of these campuses and I have serious concerns about introducing concealed weapons into these environments.

There is also unease that laboratories on our academic and health campuses, as well as hospitals, where chemicals and gases are present, often under pressure, and where equipment such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRIs) is located, create unique situations where the discharge or presence of a firearm may have consequences well beyond what one may expect in other environments.

In light of all these concerns and apprehensions, I feel the presence of concealed weapons will make a campus a less-safe environment. I respectfully trust that you and the Texas Legislature will weigh these concerns, and the safety and lives of those on our campuses, as you consider this issue.

I look forward to discussing this issue and many others with you in the weeks ahead, and thank you for considering our concerns.

Sincerely,



William H. McRaven
Chancellor