

Submitter: Seth Kezar
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB698

Dear Senate Committee On Judiciary,

I am writing to you not only as a law enforcement officer but also as a concerned citizen regarding the proposed legislation that would authorize governing bodies of certain public entities to adopt policies, ordinances, or regulations limiting the affirmative defense for concealed handgun licensees who are charged with possessing a firearm in a public building.

As a member of law enforcement, my primary concern is always the safety and security of the public. While I understand the intention behind this legislation—to enhance security in public spaces—I believe it is fundamentally misguided and may have unintended negative consequences.

First, it is important to recognize that concealed handgun licensees are not individuals who pose a risk to public safety. They have gone through a rigorous background check, have undergone training, and have demonstrated a commitment to abiding by the law. These individuals are not the problem; they are law-abiding citizens who, in many cases, carry concealed firearms for their own protection and the protection of those around them. By limiting their affirmative defense in public buildings, we would essentially penalize responsible, trained gun owners for simply exercising their constitutional right to self-defense.

Furthermore, limiting the affirmative defense for these individuals would create confusion and inconsistency in the application of the law. As law enforcement officers, we are often faced with the challenge of balancing public safety with individual rights. However, by making concealed carry more restrictive and subject to potential legal penalties, we could inadvertently put law-abiding citizens at a disadvantage in high-risk situations. This is particularly concerning in places such as government buildings, courthouses, and schools—locations that are often targets for acts of violence. Concealed carry holders may be one of the first lines of defense in such situations, and restricting their ability to legally carry firearms in these areas could make public spaces less safe, not more secure.

Additionally, there is a concern about the logistical challenges this legislation could create for law enforcement officers in the field. The enforcement of policies restricting concealed carry in public buildings may lead to an increased number of arrests for minor violations, placing an unnecessary burden on law enforcement resources. It could also create friction between law enforcement and the public, as responsible

gun owners may be unfairly penalized, despite being law-abiding citizens.

I also want to emphasize that the presence of law-abiding concealed handgun licensees in public spaces can serve as a deterrent to criminals. Knowing that there are responsible citizens who are armed and capable of defending themselves and others can discourage violent crime and ensure a faster response to dangerous situations. Limiting these rights would likely have the opposite effect, creating a more vulnerable environment for law-abiding citizens.

In conclusion, as a law enforcement officer who is committed to public safety, I strongly urge you to reconsider the proposed legislation. Rather than restricting the rights of responsible concealed handgun licensees, we should focus on enhancing security measures in public buildings, such as increased law enforcement presence, improved building access controls, and better emergency response protocols. By doing so, we can maintain public safety while respecting the rights of law-abiding citizens.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,
Seth Kezar