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### Guns on Campus

In recent years, guns have become an increasingly discussed topic across the United States and especially in educational facilities, such as college campuses. Due to high amounts of mass shootings in the country, there has been an uproar in the fight to eliminate guns from all homes and greatly diminish their accessibility. The opposing side of this ongoing argument is that citizens should have the ability to carry their own rifles in order to protect themselves in the case of any dangerous situation that would need deescalation. Recent laws that have been passed in states such as Texas and Florida have allowed for students (who have a license to carry) to carry concealed guns on campus and inside of educational buildings. Concealed carry at the University of Maryland should not be allowed because it could increase violence, it would impede on our freedom of speech, and it could increase danger in high stake situations.

Data has shown that in the years following concealed carry being allowed on campuses, crime has not decreased, and trends have actually shown increases in violence. Georgia Tech, a school that has joined in the allowance of campus carry, has had zero reports of a victim using a gun to stop an assailant. Other institutions with campus carry in states such as Utah and Texas have had no reports of a gun being used to stop a crime in many years (Downey). This data highlights that campus carry is not an effective measure of deterring crimes on campuses. The use of a gun by any person, let alone a student, to stop a crime or violent act is a very rare event and is not due cause for campus carry to be allowed on the University of Maryland Campus. Not only has there been no evidence of a decrease in crime from campus carry laws, there has actually been an increase in violence and aggravated assault. A 2014 study for the (NBER) concluded that right to carry laws have been associated with “higher rates of murder, rape, aggravated assault, robbery, auto theft, burglary and larceny”(Maximino). Students with guns on campus can use the advantage of having a weapon to threaten other students. A large amount of people in the United States with carry licenses have self reported anger issues, meaning that students on campus who carry could have mental illnesses that went unreported (Maximino). With this evidence, it is highly likely that allowing for concealed carry on the UMD campus could increase violence on and off campus, rather than increasing safety.

With the increased threat of states allowing concealed carry on campuses, many students and faculty fear that if the laws are enabled, they will feel unsafe in the classrooms, dorms, and other buildings on campus. Many teachers have expressed concerns that the knowledge of guns being carried by students in their classroom will limit their free speech and ability to give fair grades. Ellen Spiro, a professor at the University of Texas argues that guns in the classroom will interfere with the students and faculty’s ability to speak freely about controversial topics due to the fear that if a classmate disagrees, they could get angry and pull out their concealed weapon. Professors like Emeritus Daniel Hamermesh from the University of Texas have resigned because of the risk that a student could bring a gun to class and begin to shoot (Morris). If campus carry is brought onto the University of Maryland campus, free speech in class will be stifled, and the schools known diversity of ideas could be greatly limited. When students do not feel comfortable

in their own classes, they are less likely to participate or pay attention in lectures, due to an increased level of anxiety from guns in the classroom. If teachers do not feel comfortable while teaching their classes or giving fair grades because they fear that an angry student with a gun could easily come after them, the university has a great possibility of losing quality professors that contribute to the high level of education that the school offers.

In the high stress event of a shooting on campus, the presence of a student with a gun is likely to cause more harm than good. Having even a trained gun owner attempting to defend students from an intruding gunman is likely to lead to more innocent students being harmed and dangerous confusion from students and law enforcement. Dr. James Rayburn, a professor at Florida State University and an opponent of campus carry laws states that during a shooting with a crossfire, even a marines shooting accuracy drops to about 20%. He also explains that with the possibility of many students drawing guns, the police force who rush to the scene in order to stop the shooter will have a difficult time identifying who the perpetrator is (McAullife). With adrenaline rushing through their bodies and minimal gun handling training, students with guns are likely to injure innocent bystanders in the process of attempting to save them. When the police have trouble identifying who the original shooter is, this can be extremely dangerous for the student who had their gun concealed and now drawn. The police will do anything in order to end a shooting and this includes shooting at any possible perpetrator. Adding more guns into this situation is likely to leave the innocent student injured as well as many other students who may find themselves in the crossfire.

The supporting argument for concealed carry is that people feel safer when they are able to defend themselves. A student that studies at the University of Texas states that he carries on campus because he knows that police can take a long time to arrive on the scene. He states that "It's nice to know you have ultimate responsibility for your safety"(Phillips). In the event that a shooter enters a building and someone or multiple people with a concealed weapon feel the need to protect themselves, many innocent people, including the concealed weapon carrier, could be injured in the crossfire (McAullife). Simply using the taught procedures of run, hide, fight, can save more people and prevent any further confusion and injuries that come from adding more guns to such a high stress situation. Students have not been taught the procedures to follow when multiple guns are drawn, some that are attempting to harm them and some that are attempting to save them. Not knowing which is which can cause a greater amount of confusion not only for the victims, but also for the law enforcement who is attempting to save the students. Having students concealed carry within the campus is highly likely to make an already dangerous situation even more harmful.

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