

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
May 31, 2017

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill 169

Senator Wanggard and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 169 (SB 169). I am Dee Pettack, Legislative Liaison for the Department of Public Instruction (Department). The Department opposes the bill's efforts to expand the ability of persons to possess firearms on school grounds and lessen the penalties for violations of the prohibition of firearms on school property.

SB 169 makes a number of changes related to the possession of firearms in or near a school. It eliminates the state gun free school zones law and specifies that schools may prohibit the possession of firearms in schools or on the grounds by posting signs notifying people of the prohibition. To post a valid notification prohibiting firearms, a school must post a sign that is located in a prominent place near all of the probable access points to the grounds to which the prohibition applies and can be reasonably visible. Prohibitions related to posting would not apply to firearms inside of a vehicle on school property.

SB 169 lowers the penalty for violation of a prohibition from a felony to a Class C misdemeanor if the individual goes armed in a posted school building and a Class B forfeiture if the individual goes armed on the posted grounds of a school. The weakening of these penalties is especially concerning.

We need safe and effective learning environments in our schools for students to achieve their fullest potential. SB 169, which provides an avenue for more guns to be present in and around our school buildings, runs counter to this effort.