

Public Safety and Security Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: HB-5451 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING POSSESSION OF A FIREARM ON SCHOOL
GROUNDS BY A PEACE OFFICER.

Vote Date: 3/17/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/10/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Public Safety and Security Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The Public Safety and Security Committee introduced this proposal with the intent of allowing peace officers to possess and carry firearms on school grounds whether they are engaged in active duty or are not on duty. As noted in testimony, some argue that peace officers having to disarm themselves when on school property presents a serious safety risk, as the time they spend storing their weapon takes away from their duties as officers. If passed, this bill would amend Section 53-217B, bridging a possible gap in safety and remove the restriction that peace officers can only be armed on school property when on duty.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The JFS language amends Section 1 of this bill to include certified police officers to be exempt when lawfully carrying a firearm on school grounds.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None Expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Hall, Carol, State Representative-State of CT](#): Representative Hall states how officers transitioning directly from their shifts to school functions are often forced to choose between their professional responsibilities and familial commitments since an officer must travel out of their way to secure their work weapon at a station or home prior to entering school grounds. Representative Hall explains how this "dead time" is inefficient and removes these officers from the community for a long time and how

this bill solution supplies respect to the demanding schedules of those who serve and recognizes their unique qualifications.

Weir, Steve, State Representative- CT General Assembly: Representative Weir believes that giving trained law enforcement officers the ability to carry a firearm when off-duty could make schools safer. He stated that if this bill passes, potential threats would not only have to factor in school officers but also parents and others who are off-duty peace officers. Representative Weir concludes with how peace officers have the knowledge and training to carry a firearm, regardless of whether they are on or off duty.

Puorro, Derek, Police Lieutenant-AFSCME Local 1361: Mr. Puorro states how many people wrongfully assume that officers are already cleared to carry their weapons off duty, which is untrue and leads to problems for officers and misunderstandings. Mr. Puorro explained how the requirement of officers to do additional shifts has increased recently due to the shortage of officers, and this time crunch adds wear and tear to members. Mr. Porter described how occasionally officers must leave headquarters to do things such as picking their children up from school, and at times it is impossible for officers to go home, lock their weapons, and then make it on time to pick their children up, which induces stress. Mr. Puorro, therefore, states that this bill alleviates stress and has no risk but rather added benefits as officers are highly trained and add to public safety regardless of whether they are on duty or not.

Bennett, Stephen: Mr. Bennett states how law enforcement's armed presence serves as an additional deterrence at no cost to the schools when they are on school grounds.

Grabeck, Martin: Mr. Grabeck states how this proposed legislation is a sensible update to Connecticut law and strengthens school safety, as these officers now have the ability to supply immediate expert response to threats while deterring violence and saving lives. Mr. Grabeck highlights how the current law fosters frivolous liability risks for off-duty officers who are parents and community members. He described how this change allows student and staff protection to be prioritized without giving up accountability.

Anonymous 12: Supports this legislation

Anonymous 17: Supports this legislation

Anonymous 9: Supports this legislation

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Dias, Kate, President-CEA: Ms. Dias stated the CEA's opposition as they do not support unnecessary firearms in schools. Ms. Dias described how many shooters are mentally ill members of the community and how data reveals that firearms' presence increases the risk of school shootings.

Mayer, Stacey, Dir of Advocacy - Policy-CT Against Gun Violence: Ms. Mayer stated that the more guns that are allowed in schools, the greater the chance of conflict escalating, accidental discharge, and shootings occurring. Even if security is thoroughly trained, she states, they can unintentionally discharge their weapons on school property. She explained how guns increase the risk of injury and death and having them in schools makes for a dangerous environment. She also highlights how having guns on school property increases the chance that a weapon might be stolen and used in crimes by unauthorized students and those who are legally prohibited from using firearms. Ms. Mayer also states how guns at schools can intimidate students, which disrupts

concentration and learning, as well as how just the presence of firearms on school grounds can cause trauma. According to Ms. Mayer, there is no evidence that more armed individuals will make schools safer, and she believes if this legislation is passed, it would endanger students, teachers, and staff.

Feinstein, Andrew, Legislative Chair: Mr. Feinstein stated how the Special Education Equity for Kids in Connecticut sees no justification for allowing any peace officer to carry a loaded weapon into a school when they are not engaged in official duties and believes that guns need to be kept out of schools. Mr. Feinstein explains how this bill allows a broad population of people to bring guns into schools, as the definition in C.G.S. 53a-3 of a peace officer is very broad. He concluded how passing this legislation will not only have a detrimental impact on mental health by traumatizing students but will also eventually result in gun violence in schools.

Isaac, Martin, Board Chair-CAGV Education Fund: Mr. Martin strongly opposes this bill, as even though the intent could enhance school safety, it can also induce unacceptable risks to students, foster significant liability for municipalities, and destroy necessary principles of local control. Mr. Martin explained how standard school safety protocols rely on a coordinated, clear chain of command and how SROs work under an MOU that connects them to school drills and communication networks. Mr. Martin explained how this bill ignores these safeguards and how an off-duty officer in civilian clothes holding a firearm is at high risk of being misidentified during a shooting by law enforcement, potentially causing "blue-on-blue" friendly fire incidents. Due to Mr. Martin's previous membership on the Trumbull Board of Finance, he points out how this bill introduces a new category of risk: if a weapon is left or accidentally discharged in a school, the legal and financial burden will fall on the local school district and their taxpayers. Mr. Martin concludes with how schools should be education havens, not filled with unmonitored weapons. Rather, he states, Connecticut should invest in proven preventative measures, like mental health resources and violence intervention.

Patrick, Barbara, Board Chair-CT Against Gun Violence- Mr. Barbara believes the presence of a firearm increases harm and explains how there are many scenarios where the presence of a firearm at schools could go terribly wrong. Mr. Barbara also does not believe that officers on school grounds would benefit from this, as data reveals the presence of a firearm, regardless of location, increases the chance of violence or wrongful use.

Anonymous 14: Strongly opposes this legislation due to their belief that this bill has no place in the current legislative session, as this is a short session and non-fiscal bills like this are a waste of time and resources. They believe the legislature should be focused on funding the state properly and explained that lawmakers should save gun laws for a long session where it has the opportunity for a full debate. In addition, they also express their concerns regarding the bill's merits, as they suggest it should go further by allowing all law-abiding permit holders to carry on school property. They believe that teachers, staff, and other responsible adults with permits should be encouraged to protect our kids. They described how manifestos from shooters state that they target gun-free zones, as no one's there to fight back, and therefore arming licensed citizens who are already on the grounds could save lives faster.

Anonymous 28: Strongly opposes this legislation.

Reported by: Emma Rybacki, Clerk
Emma Green, Assist. Clerk

Date: 3/31/26