

Testimony on Bill No. 7274

By
Mr. Joseph Sikora

Good afternoon, my name is Joe Sikora. I am the Director of Security for the East Hartford Public School System. I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak before you in favor of Bill Number 7274, **AN ACT CONCERNING POSSESSION OF EDGED WEAPONS AT SCHOOL**. Throughout the state as well as the nation, we have all heard of people bringing weapons into our schools. The purpose of addressing you today is to show the need for a statute such as this and to ask for your support in taking a proactive stance against individuals who choose to bring bringing knives or cutting instruments into a school that could inflict death or serious physical injury to a student in a Connecticut school.

The goal of our school policies and our laws should be to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for the students in our schools. The need for the legislation being proposed can be seen in recent events that have taken place in our state as well as neighboring states within the last 6 to 8 months:

On January 19, 2007 at Lincoln Sudbury High School in Massachusetts, a 15 year old student was stabbed to death in a school hallway

Students were cut or stabbed at schools or school events in Stratford and Newington.

An East Hartford High School student was stabbed to death at a house party on a Friday night, and a young New Hartford resident was stabbed to death after being involved in a dispute.

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These are only 5 events that show the deadly results that can happen by the use of knives or cutting instruments, and that these items have no place in Connecticut Schools.

The statutes that we currently have leave a gap in the enforcement area when students bring certain knives or cutting instruments to school.

Possession of a Weapon on school grounds , 53a-217b deals specifically with firearms or deadly weapons as defined in section 53a-3 which defines a "Deadly weapon" as any weapon, whether loaded or unloaded, from which a shot may be discharged, or a switchblade knife, gravity knife, billy, blackjack, bludgeon, or metal knuckles.

Statute 53-206. Carrying of dangerous weapons prohibited. (a) Any person who carries upon his or her person any BB. gun, blackjack, metal or brass knuckles, or any dirk knife, or any switch knife, or any knife having an automatic spring release device by which a blade is released from the handle, having a blade of over one and one-half inches in length, or stiletto, **or any knife the edged portion of the blade of which is four inches or over in length,** any police baton or nightstick, or any martial arts weapon or electronic defense weapon, as defined in section 53a-3, or any other dangerous or deadly weapon or instrument. The way our statutes are currently written, the statute can be interpreted as it is legal to bring box cutters or knives with a cutting edge of 3 and $\frac{3}{4}$ inches to school. These items can inflict serious injury if used inappropriately. Passing this legislation and then educating our students, parents and guardians that it is illegal to bring knives and cutting instruments to school would have a positive effect on school climate and the ability of our students to be educated in a safe and healthy learning environment. This legislation will make some students think twice before bringing cutting instruments to school. This will reduce the opportunity for students to react in a fit

of anger by reaching for a cutting instrument and making a decision that could ruin their lives and that of another student or staff member. As you know this decision would not just affect the two or more people involved in the incident. It is far reaching, and touches family members, friends and ultimately, the entire community.

The time to act is now, before we have a fatality in one of our schools or before another serious incident occurs. I will leave you with one of my favorite quotes from Edmund Burke "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good people do nothing" We are good people; let us take the necessary steps to keep our children safe.