

My name is Colleen Cunningham. I am a mom and a former teacher, and I am writing today in opposition to HB2059.

As part of my education (BA in psychology, and an MA in special education), we studied brain development. In short, the part of the brain responsible for responding to situations with good, rational judgment, and consideration of long-term consequences is the prefrontal cortex. That part of the brain does not finish developing until age 25. As a result, adults over the age of 25 make decisions using the prefrontal cortex, while people under that age make decisions relying on their amygdala, which processes events emotionally and is central to “fight or flight” responses.

We know from existing research what happens when you add a firearm to this incomplete brain development. Namely, 18-, 19- and 20-year olds commit gun homicides at a rate that is four times higher than adults age 21 and older. Here in Kansas, we are already facing a dramatic increase in the rate of homicides, climbing 31% between 2009 and 2018, compared with an 18% increase nationally over the same period. It would be ill-advised to invite a greater increase in our homicide rate by lowering the concealed carry age to include teenagers, whose brain development is incomplete.

For these reasons, I ask that you oppose HB 2059. Thank you for your time.