

Governor Brian Kemp
206 Washington Street
Suite 203, State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

Governor Kemp,

We write to you today to share our concerns on legislation approved by lawmakers and sent to your desk for consideration, SB 319, which would allow hidden, loaded firearms to be carried in our communities without a permit or its background check process.

We understand that you have stated your intent to sign this legislation and want to share concerns which we hope you will consider before taking such action. As mayors representing thousands of Georgians across our state, we have heard concerns throughout our communities — from constituents and law enforcement officials – regarding the detrimental impact of this bill being signed into law.

Law enforcement officials in our cities and across the state have raised major concerns with the effect this legislation will have on public safety. Citing increases in stolen guns, law enforcement officials worry that the bill would encourage more Georgians to carry and leave their weapons in cars and other unsecured locations, leading to a further rise in firearm theft. Officers also have also warned that this law would “cause an increase in gun crimes,” “put us backward,” and leave them in “uncharted waters” when it comes to determining whether an armed individual is lawfully carrying a firearm.

SB 319 would create a new gun safety loophole by eliminating the permit requirement for anyone wanting to carry a concealed firearm in public – a process that includes a background check. If this bill becomes law, it would be easier for individuals with a criminal history who purchased a gun through a private sale – which is not subject to a background check – to carry a weapon in our communities without any background check.

In 2020, over 5,200 applicants were denied a permit to carry a concealed weapon in public in Georgia, mostly due to prior criminal records, history of domestic violence, outstanding arrest warrants, or flags on the individual’s mental health. With your signature on SB 319, people who would be denied a permit based on a background check would not have one conducted before they carry a gun in public.

Across the country, states that have weakened their concealed carry permitting systems saw up to a 15 percent spike in violent crime and an 11 percent increase in gun-related homicide. Georgia already has the 17th highest rate of gun deaths in the nation, and we cannot afford to further

jeopardize our communities' safety. We must work together to reduce crime in our state – not allow more deadly weapons on our streets.

Our constituents have been very vocal in sharing how this legislation would make them feel less safe in their communities. They join the 70 percent of all Georgians who oppose such a policy, as well as overwhelming majorities of gun owners, Republicans, Democrats, and Independents nationwide who agree that we must have high safety standards in issuing concealed carry permits.

We all care about public safety. The bottom line is that by eliminating an essential checkpoint in our system, this bill would make it easier for criminals to carry guns and make our streets more dangerous. We sincerely hope that you will take this information into account as you consider signing legislation that would have a detrimental impact on our communities' safety and the safety of all Georgians.

Thank you,

Mayor Kevin Brown

Buena Vista

Mayor Joyce Denson

Toomsboro

Mayor John Ernst

Brookhaven

Mayor Kelly Girtz

Athens-Clarke County

Mayor Bobby Jenkins

Cuthbert

Mayor Van Johnson

Savannah

Mayor Vince Williams

Union City

President, National League of Cities