

Catholic bishops oppose ‘permitless carry’ in open letter to Texas legislators

In an open letter to the Texas Legislature and the 8.5 million Catholics who live in the state, the state’s Catholic bishops call on people to join them in opposing “permitless carry,” as it is being presented in a bill that has moved through the Texas House and is expected to be considered by the Texas Senate the week of May 3.

Noting that the state has seen too many mass shootings, the bishops call for a response to “this growing culture of violence with a commitment to life, a vision of hope, and a call to action. HB 1927 fails to reflect a commitment to life or a vision of hope and instead accomplishes nothing more than to make it easier for potentially violent persons to act in anger or delusion.

“Too often we have seen how guns are used in the public forum by someone acting in anger. Instead of relying on law enforcement and our justice system, people with guns in public areas can become the aggrieved, the jury and the judge, in swift and violent sequence,” the bishops wrote, adding that “respect for the dignity of human life and moral responsibility will be further eroded” with the passage of HB 1927.

The letter was signed by the ordinary for each of the 15 dioceses and the Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter. It is reprinted in its entirety.

Oppose HB 1927 and a culture of violence

As Catholic bishops in the state of Texas, we bear responsibility for the pastoral care of people. We oppose HB 1927, known as the “permitless carry” bill. This bill, should it become law, would remove important safeguards to protect human life in our local communities.

As pastors we are alarmed at the aggressive calls for the unfettered presence of weapons carried into public places. Many of our communities have been shattered by mass shootings; and many more live in fear of these violent events. We have all seen the loss of lives, the suffering of victims, the inconsolable sorrow at the funerals.

We must confront this growing culture of violence with a commitment to life, a vision of hope, and a call to action. HB 1927 fails to reflect a commitment to life or a vision of hope and instead accomplishes nothing more than to make it easier for potentially violent persons to act in anger or delusion. This will cause people to feel more threatened and more afraid.

Too often we have seen how guns are used in the public forum by someone acting in anger. Instead of relying on law enforcement and our justice system, people with guns in public areas can become the aggrieved, the jury and the judge, in swift and violent sequence. Passions can quickly escalate when a gun is present in a disagreement among people. Instead of resolving issues by peaceful, civil actions, a permitless carry law will further advance the mentality that every individual is a law unto himself or herself. Respect for the dignity of human life and moral responsibility will be further eroded.

HB 1927 risks increasing the number of deaths, as more untrained individuals would be carrying guns in more public spaces. We are also concerned this bill would allow those with mental health issues to carry handguns. This would place our communities at greater risk of harm.

Catholics and all people of good will are urged to contact their state senators and the governor to support policy and legislative measures that uphold the safety and well-being of all persons in our communities and to oppose HB 1927. Law enforcement officials do not support HB 1927, as it makes their oath to protect the public much more difficult. Nor do we, since it advances a culture of violence that puts everyone at further risk.

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