Testimony by Andrea Gore, February 12, 2015 at the Senate Hearing on SB11 by Birdwell (Concealed Carry)

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak. My name is Andrea Gore, and I reside in senate district 24. I am a professor of pharmacy at UT-Austin and I am using my personal time to express my concerns about SB 11. I teach the mandatory anatomy and physiology class to all of our first year pharmacy students. There are several aspects of campus life that make guns in the classroom dangerous to my students and me. The layout of my classroom makes it impossible to exit the classroom easily in event of emergency, and there is no cell phone reception in that room. This would be an extremely unsafe environment if anyone drew or used a gun.

To best accommodate my students’ busy pharmacy work and class schedules, I am willing to hold office hours at unusual hours. I have been alone in my office with students crying or even begging me to give them a passing grade that they had not earned. If SB-11 passes I will no longer be able to meet students at times that best serve their needs.

I am a neuroscientist, and my research area is how the brain develops from birth through adolescence to adulthood. Research consistently shows that the human brain does not finish developing until the mid twenties, and many decision-making processes do not fully mature until that age. The typical age when a student attends a university overlaps exactly with the life stage when many mental illnesses such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder first develop. Without the safety net of family, the consequences of mental illness together with weapons can be catastrophic.

I ask for an amendment that gives individual campuses the choice to opt in or out of this bill, if passed into law. I am hopeful that the senate will trust the unique knowledge about firearms possessed by our new Chancellor, Admiral Bill McRaven, and allow him to lead the UT campuses in making their individual informed choices.