

To The Honorable Members of the South Carolina State Legislature:

We, the undersigned, write in opposition to legislation that would weaken our gun safety laws to allow the open carry of loaded handguns in public or the adoption of permitless carry, which would eliminate the requirement to have a permit to carry loaded handguns in public.

As people of faith, we have a moral obligation not just to preach and teach within our own congregations, but also to seek the welfare of the communities where we serve.

People of faith have been at the forefront of the fight against gun violence in South Carolina. Houses of worship have organized memorial vigils, prayer services, and other events to combat gun violence. As faith leaders in our state, we know all too well the devastating consequences of gun violence, as we approach six years since a white supremacist murdered nine Black parishioners at Mother Emanuel AME church in Charleston. Faith leaders and members of religious communities have the task of helping their friends, neighbors, and families put their lives back together after being shattered by gun violence.

Legislation such as HB 3094 would allow a person to openly carry a loaded handgun in sensitive areas like protests and demonstrations, playgrounds, and bars and other places that serve alcohol. The day-to-day dangers of open carry are real. Families and businesses will be forced to decipher who is and is not a danger. Law enforcement will be forced to do the same. After the mass shooting of five police officers in Dallas, both the police chief and the mayor said law enforcement couldn't tell "good guys with guns" from "bad guys with guns" because it is perfectly legal to open carry in Texas. Proposed legislation to allow permitless carry would follow states who have seen an increase in gun violence after adopting the policy. In addition to the impact on everyday life, no one can ignore that these proposals are coming at the worst time, with the steadily increasing extremism we are seeing across the country.

Open carry and permitless carry are exploited by anti-government extremists and white supremacists to intimidate the public. Make no mistake, the events that engulfed the U.S. Capitol are only one example of the violent rhetoric that has been steadily increasing across the nation. In the aftermath of the election, we've seen the armed intimidation of election officials in multiple states. Extremists in Michigan, plotted to kidnap the governor. Armed protesters descended on the home of Ohio's state health director. In 2017, In advance of a planned "Unite the Right" White Nationalist rally in Charlottesville, a self-styled "militia group" descended on the city openly carrying firearms.

A 2018 poll showed that 90 percent of South Carolina voters — including 90 percent of Republicans, 92 percent of Democrats, 89 percent of gun-owning households support prohibiting people from openly carrying loaded handguns in public places. The same poll showed 76 percent of South Carolina voters oppose making it legal to carry a loaded handgun in public without a permit or safety training. We ask that you stand with them and stand with us as we confront violence with love and work together to promote a culture of life and peace. We ask that you oppose any effort to allow the open carry of loaded handguns in public or the adoption of permitless carry.

Melody Geddis McFadden, Founder and Pastor
Blessed Ministries
Greenville

Carroll Johnson, Elder
Nazareth Holiness Church Of Deliverance
Summerville

Cathy Jamieson, District Superintendent
United Methodist Church
Columbia

John Culp, Retired Minister
United Methodist Church
West Columbia

Tom Summers, Retired Minister
United Methodist Church
Columbia

James Nichols, Retired Lutheran Pastor
Chapin

Alston Lippert, Associate Pastor
Washington Street United Methodist Church
Columbia

Franklin Colclough, Pastor
Harmony Presbyterian Church
Alcolu

Manella Calhoun, Stewardship of Creation Enabler
Foothills Presbytery
Anderson

Reverend Dr. Patrick Perryman, Senior Pastor
Sam Cooper, Retired Minister
Gambrell Foster, Elder, Clerk of Session
Roxanne Cheney, Elder
Nan Krueger, Elder
First Presbyterian Church
Beaufort

Rev. James Dannals, Retired Vicar
St. Mark's Episcopal Church
Beaufort

Ricky Howell, Pastor
Penelope Rahm, Pastor of Evangelism and Outreach
Waters Edge United Methodist Church
Beaufort

Jody P. Foster, Pastor
Wedgefield Presbyterian Church/New Harmony Presbytery
Sumter

Jenny McDevitt, Senior Pastor
MaryAnne Banich Massey, DMIN, Elder
Cheri Stakely, Elder
Gina Brinson, Elder
Shandon Presbyterian Church
Columbia

Jonathan Coffey, Retired Priest
St. Mark's Episcopal Church
Port Royal

Rev. Jennifer Hope Kottler, Pastor
John Calvin Presbyterian Church
Florence

Rev. Gavin D. Meek, Transitional Executive Presbyter and Stated Clerk
New Harmony Presbytery, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Florence

Nicholas Cheek, Senior Pastor
First Presbyterian Church, USA
Florence

Charles Elliott, Parish Associate
First Presbyterian Church
Myrtle Beach

Carnell Hampton, Moderator
Ebenezer Presbyterian Church
Sumter

Carol Pagelsen, Retired Pastor
Presbyterian Church (USA)
North Myrtle Beach

Elijah Washington, Pastor

New Covenant Presbyterian Church
Sumter

Richard Dozier, Sr., D. Min., Pastor
Goodwill Presbyterian Church
Maysville

Vikki Brogdon, Minister of Word and Sacrament
Summerton Presbyterian Church
Summerton

Joanne Sizoo, Pastor
Grace Presbyterian Church
Rock Hill

James Randolph McSpadden, Retired Minister
Presbyterian Church U.S.A.
Rock Hill

Jennifer Marshall, Associate Pastor for Care and Congregational Life
Georgetown Presbyterian Church
Georgetown

Emily Sutton, Pastor
Bethel United Methodist Church
Rock Hill

Jim Morton, Elder
First Presbyterian Church
Lancaster

Merrio Morton, Former Senior Warden
Christ Episcopal Church
Lancaster

Reverend Dr. Mark Verdery
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Rock Hill

Apostle Dr. Ricky Ricardo Garner Sr., Prelate and Senior Apostle
Israel Apostolic Ministries
Hopkins

Hillary Taylor, Pastor
Bethany United Methodist Church
Saluda

Suzanne Walker, Congregational Specialist
SC Annual Conference - UMC
Goose Creek

Edward Stallworth, Pastor
Inman United Methodist Church
Inman

Sandra King, Pastor
Disciples United Methodist Church
Greenville

Kathy Hudson, Pastor
Harris United Methodist Church
Greenwood

Richard Reams, Senior Pastor
North Charleston United Methodist Church
North Charleston

Weston Pendergrass, Pastor
Grace United Methodist Church
Greer

Rev. Frank Houston, Ministerial Staff
First Calvary Baptist Church
Columbia

Sam Roberson, Retired Pastor
Presbyterian (USA) Honorably Retired
Fort Mill

Rev. Frank E. Lybrand, Retired Minister
United Methodist Church
Beaufort

Rev. Meg Hughey Wilkes, Deacon/Connections Pastor
The United Methodist Church
North Augusta

Alisha Hansen, Pastor
St. Paul United Methodist Church
Chesterfield

Tom Wall, Director-Campus Minister

UMC Campus Ministry at University of South Carolina
Columbia

Keith D. Ray II, Protestant Clergy
Retired
Greenville

Tiffany Knowlin Boykin, Pastor
Wesley United Methodist Church
Columbia

Robin Dease, Clergy
United Methodist Church
Hartsville

Rev Philip Chandler, Pastor
Richburg UMC & Pleasant Grove UMC
Rock Hill

Miyoung Paik, Pastor
St. James United Methodist Church
Goose Creek

Rev. Kevin Lindley, Pastor
St Luke United Methodist Church
Walhalla

Walter Strawther, Associate Pastor
Hibben United Methodist Church
Mount Pleasant

Rev. Cathy Joens
SC Conference The United Methodist Church
Greenville

Jad Taylor, Pastor
Beulah United Methodist Church
Gaston

Emily Kirby, Pastor
Coastal Carolina Wesley Foundation
Conway

Kartika Gibson, Deaconess
Charity Missionary Baptist Church
North Charleston

Reverend William A Gause, Associate Minister
Greater True Light Ministry
Myrtle Beach

Ella Busby, Pastor
Second Presbyterian Church (USA)
Sumter

Cedric Blain-Spain, Chair & Founder/CEO
PEACE Ministries Worldwide
Conway

Delcia Harper-Baxter, Pastor
Cheryl Jackson, Elder
Calvin Wilson, Elder
Pontheola Wilson , Elder
New Harvest Presbyterian Church (USA)
Florence

Reverend Sharon Risher, Minister at Large
New Emmanuel UCC
Charlotte NC

Othan F. Sharp, Pastor
Mt. Lisbon/Trinity Presbyterian Church
Bishopville

Robin Halewood, Retired
St. Stephen's Episcopal Church Charleston
Mt Pleasant

Dr. Evangelist Sonya Gray, Founder/CEO
S&R Ministries International
Spartanburg

Grace Gifford, Clerk
Horry Friends Meeting (Quakers)
Horry County

Theodore Jackson, President
South Carolina Baptist Deacons Association
Lugoff

Rev. Reggie Rowell, Retired Clergy
SC Conference of the United Methodist Church

Columbia

Lynn Newsom, Clerk
Bluffton Friends Worship Group
Bluffton

Regina H. Moore, Executive Minister/CEO
South Carolina Christian Action Council
Columbia

Nicole Freeman, Clerk
Signed on behalf of Columbia Friends Meeting and in affirmation the Religious Society of Friends
peace testimony.
Columbia

Kathy Hudson, Pastor
Harris United Methodist Church
Greenwood

Michael Bruce, Pastor (retired)
United Methodist Church
Charleston

Michael Johnson, Clerk
Upstate Friends Meeting (Quakers)
Lyman

Mary B. Griffin, Pastor (retired)
United Methodist Church
Columbia

Chrisie Reece-Pendergrass, Outreach Pastor
St. Matthew United Methodist Church
Greenville

Laura Whitt, Pastor
Surfside United Methodist Church
Surfside

Macy Cottom, Director of Children and Family Ministries
First Presbyterian Church of Myrtle Beach
Myrtle Beach

John T. Miller, Pastor
Emanuel Baptist Church
Summerville

J. R. Matthews, Pastor
Chesterfield Missionary Baptist Church
Longs

Rev. Dr. Sherri B. Ashbee, Associate Minister
Baum Temple AME Zion Church
Summerville

Mary S Tucker, Pastor/ Retired
AME Zion Church
Summerville

Dr Charles Jackson, Pastor
Sharion M Jackson, Co-Pastor
Faith and Deliverance International
Gaston

Francine Floyd Murray, Elder
United Worship Center
North Charleston

Kendall Collins, Pastor
Hickory Hill Baptist Church
Cottageville

Rev. H.A. Gregory, III, Pastor
New Home AME Zion Church
York

Rev. Steve Doughty
Honorably Retired Minister of the Presbyterian Church (USA);
Greenville

Pastor Fredrick Giles, Lead Pastor
Prevail Church
Greenville SC

Minister Renee Richardson
Member of Trinity AME Church affiliated with Emanuel AME & Blessed Ministries