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March 12, 2013

The Honorable Rick Perry
Governor of Texas
State Capitol
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Governor Perry:

Since the last legislative session, the nation has experienced new episodes of gun violence that have sharpened national attention on the issue. In that context and as in recent sessions, the 83rd Texas Legislature is considering legislation relating to the presence of concealed handguns on university campuses. As Chancellor of the state's largest university system, I take this opportunity to express my concerns, as I did during the 82nd legislative session.

I respect the legislature's authority to decide this public policy issue, and that neither all legislators nor the Texans they represent will agree. However, during my tenure as Chancellor, parents, students, faculty, staff, administrators, and institutional law enforcement officers have all expressed concern that the presence of concealed handguns on our campuses will make the campus environment less safe.

There is both a general concern about the danger that handguns inherently present, as well as specific concerns. Campus mental health professionals, who regularly face the reality that suicide is a leading cause of death among university students, are concerned that the presence of handguns will lead to an increase in accidental and self-inflicted wounds. Campus law enforcement personnel are particularly concerned about the ability of their officers, each a highly trained professional, to distinguish—in colloquial terms—the good guys from the bad guys on a crowded campus when several persons may have guns visible in an incident. And personnel in our university laboratories and hospitals are concerned about their environments where gases and chemicals under pressure may present unique dangers were a firearm to be discharged.

I acknowledge the great work our police officers perform every day across our university campuses to make them safe. Both supporters and opponents of permitting concealed handguns on university campuses believe their approach will make campuses safer. I believe that, on balance, the permitted presence of concealed weapons will contribute to a less-safe campus environment. I respectfully request that the legislature ensure that all concerns and considerations are weighed as it makes such an important decision, as I am confident it will.

With great respect,

Francisco G. Cigarroa

Francisco G. Cigarroa, M.D.
Chancellor

FGC/jbp

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