



# LENA C. TAYLOR

Wisconsin State Senator • 4th District

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**FOR IMMEDIATE ADVISORY:**

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**For more information, contact:**

Zach Benson, 608-266-5810

## **The Intersection of Guns and Race**

*Taylor Concerned About Guns in School Given Racial Disparities*

(MADISON) Yesterday, the Florida Legislature passed Senate Bill 7026 and it's on the way to Governor Rick Scott's desk. The legislation is a sweeping gun and school-safety bill that would make many changes to Florida's gun laws. Notably, it would provide for a "guardian" program, allowing for trained school employees to carry guns. Scott has 15 days to either sign or veto the legislation.

Senator Lena Taylor (D – Milwaukee) released the following statement in response to the "Guardian" portion of the Senate Bill 7026, so named in honor of Aaron Feis, the late Stoneman Douglas assistant football coach who gave his life protecting students during the school shooting.

"I am incredibly proud of the work done by the students of Stoneman Douglas to move members of the Florida legislature to take meaningful action on creating safer school environments for students and the community. That said, I am concerned with a provision in the bill that provides for the ability of a school "guardian" to aid in the prevention or abatement of active assailant incidents on school premises. These guardians would be composed of school employees who are classroom teachers of a Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps, a current service member, or current or former law enforcement officer.

"Given the intersection of race and disparate treatment in terms of school suspensions, expulsions and how students of color are at times perceived by teachers and administrators, I am worried about how some of these interactions could play out. When you consider the incidents of questionable officer-involved shootings, that have left the African-American community particularly frustrated, when there wasn't a gun or weapon present by an assailant, there is room for a conversation here. The law doesn't specify what types of actions could rise to the level of gun use, it simply reads 'active assailant incidents on school premises'. An assailant is simply a person who physically attacks another, so it's not clear what would be permissible under the law as written.

"And for the folks who would say, 'you are worrying for nothing', the Florida legislation specifies that for a person to be eligible to be a guardian they must successfully complete at least 12 hours of a certified nationally recognized diversity training program. So clearly, I am not the only one raising this concern."