



Buckeye Firearms Association

Testimony of Rob Sexton

On behalf of Buckeye Firearms Association

Before the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee

May 27th, 2020, 5:00 PM

Senate Finance Hearing Room

Chairman Coley, members of the Senate Government Oversight Committee, I am Rob Sexton, the Legislative Affairs Director for the Buckeye Firearms Association. BFA is non-profit social welfare organization that defends and advances the right of more than 4 million Ohio citizens to own and use firearms for all legal activities, including self-defense, hunting, competition, and recreation. It is the self defense aspect of our mission that brings me here today to testify. Or more accurately put, the defense of others, in this case our most precious legacy, our children.

I am here to express our strong support for Chairman Coley's Senate Bill 317, which would clarify the law with regard to the right of a school district to permit its personnel to be armed in order to protect students and other staff from an attack. Senate Bill 317 became necessary after the 12th District Court of Appeals overturned a lower court decision that affirmed the right of the Madison Local School District in Butler County to allow its staff to carry a firearm as one aspect of a school safety plan.

In 2018 the school district joined many others across Ohio by implementing a comprehensive safety program that included an armed response team inside schools. They knew, like we know, that engaging an active killer quickly saves lives. A lawsuit financed by former NY City Mayor Mike Bloomberg's Everytown for Gun Safety challenged the school district's safety program.

The Appeals Court ruling interpreted Ohio law as requiring the same level of training a police officer would need for anyone armed in a school in a voluntary capacity. This flawed interpretation would require more than 700 hours of training, much of it completely unrelated to the situation the district is trying to address. Worse, this decision will prevent any school district in Ohio from allowing staff to go armed to save the lives of school children in the event of an active killer situation.

In addition to overturning the lower court, the appellate court decision is in conflict with the plain language of the statute. It is also in conflict with an opinion by Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine in 2013. While an appeal to the Ohio Supreme Court is possible, it is also very costly and will string this issue out for much longer than is tolerable. Because the appellate court decision is so out of step with prevailing legal thought, the better solution for Madison and for any school district would be for the General Assembly to make the law crystal clear.

Chairman Coley's Senate Bill 317 does just that, specifically carving out an exemption that states that training requirements for special police, security guards or others working in a police capacity do not apply to other people who have voluntarily been authorized by the school district to go armed provided they are not being employed as a special police officer or security officer.

Chairman Coley's bill removes the opportunity for alternate interpretations of this section of law and puts this decision where it belongs, in the hands of the local school district and those who would volunteer to provide this level of protection for our school kids. We appreciate his quick attention to this issue along with President Obhof and would ask this committee to approve SB 317 as soon as possible.

I am happy to answer questions from members of the committee. Thank you.