GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT AND REFORM COMMITTEE

Witness Form

Today's Date JULY 19, 2020

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Organization Representing: NONE

Testifying on Bill Number: SB 317

Testimony: _____ Verbal _____ Written _____ Both

Testifying As: _____ Proponent ✓ Opponent _____ Interested Party

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Testimony on Senate Bill 317
Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Submitted by:
Douglas Rogers

Chair Coley, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to SB 317.

By way of background, I spent hundreds of hours of training in the hot Georgia sun (Ft. Benning, Georgia and Ft. Gordon, Georgia) on the use of firearms and ordnance. After becoming a lawyer, I received an honorable discharge as a captain in the Military Police and now have 7 grandchildren in schools from preschool to high school. When physical school resumes, I expect periodically to be picking up at least three grandchildren from school each week. The thought of teachers or other school staff carrying loaded guns without the rigorous training required by state law is frightening.

Yet SB317 would permit a local school board to authorize an individual with no training or experience in firearms to carry a loaded firearm into a school in Ohio. In contrast, police officers and security officers in school are currently required, and would continue to be required, to have completed 737 hours of firearm training under the Ohio Police Officer Training Academy standards. In other words: SB317 would create two standards – one for police officers and security guards to keep students and teachers safe (727 hours of training) and no training required for teachers, coaches and others to patrol the schools with loaded firearms and endanger the lives of students and teachers.

SB317 would encourage local school boards that feel they are strapped for funds to rely on untrained individuals to bring loaded firearms into schools. It would represent a race to the bottom - tossing aside concerns for the safety of students and teachers. Proponents put our children and grandchildren at risk to save a few dollars

Earlier this year, the American Bar Association concluded that "arming teachers will increase the risk of students being shot, not reduce it." https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_interest/gun_violence/policy/19M106A/, April 15, 2020. In other words, allowing teachers, coaches and volunteers with no training to bring loaded guns into schools would endanger Ohio school children. Passing SB317 would a dereliction of duty by the legislators voting for it.

Listen to the overwhelming voices of teachers, police and other school safety experts who strongly oppose allowing untrained individuals to bring loaded guns into schools:

- The Executive Director of the Patrolman's Benevolent Association of Ohio testified in 2019, "There must be a minimum training requirement for someone entrusted with the awesome right of carrying a weapon that can deprive another

person of their life." https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-committee-documents?id=GA133-HB-178

· A 2019 report by the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers and Everytown for Gun Safety states: "The most dangerous idea in the American education system is that arming teachers or school staff is an effective solution to an active shooter incident. Everytown, AFT, and NEA strongly urge, as a matter of student safety, that schools reject attempts to arm teachers and instead focus on proven solutions that intervene to prevent shootings." https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/keepingourschoolssafe2019.pdf , p. 30

· March 8, 2018: "Arming teachers", J. Thomas Manger, long time police chief of suburban Montgomery County, Maryland, said "Arming teachers … would put police officers and others in a problematic situation. 'A cop shows up and there's people with guns in their hand. We don't know who's the good guy, who's the bad guy. That's very dangerous for the police. And it's dangerous for the community." https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2018/03/police-chiefs-call-bullshit-on-arming-teachers-sandy-hook-parkland-columbine/

· February 22, 2018: The National Association of School Resource Officers strongly recommends that "no firearms be on a school campus except those carried by carefully selected, specially trained school resource officers (SRO's) who are career law enforcement officers with sworn authority, deployed by employing police departments or agencies in community-oriented policing assignments to work in collaboration with schools." https://www.nasro.org/news/2018/02/22/news-releases/nasro-opposes-arming-teachers/

· March 2, 2020: Giffords Center to Fight Gun Violence: "Armed adults frequently mishandle their guns in schools. Arming teachers wouldn't decrease risk to students – it would increase their risk. Our comprehensive analysis finds there have been more than 90 publicly reported incidents of mishandled guns at schools in the last five years, including: A teacher's loaded falling from his waistband during a cartwheel. A student grabbing an officer's gun while the officer attempted to subdue the student. A teacher unintentionally firing a gun in class during a safety demonstration."

· Spring, 2020: John Rosiak, founder of Prevention Partnerships, wrote: "Armed educators are more likely to inflict harm on an innocent bystander, or cause confusion when a law enforcement officer responds to a shooting scene." Also, an educator could lose control of the firearm by being overpowered by students, or having a gun stolen. Also, arming educators can cause trauma to students who will be concerned by knowing that those who educate them are carrying firearms" (emphasis added) https://www.iirp.edu/images/pdf/JOSS_Spr_2020_Arming_Educators_Rosiak.pdf

Disregarding these experts, Senator Coley said: "Senate Bill 317, Exempt from training if allowed to go armed in school safety zone." https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-committee-documents?id=GA133-

SB-317. Yet taking a loaded gun into a school is when you especially need training – not when you need an exemption. Forbidding guns in schools is one example the Supreme Court has given of appropriate government regulation. Senator Coley has it backwards on exemption.

There is no Second Amendment issue here. The U.S. Supreme Court - in ruling on gun regulations - said, "nothing in our opinion should be taken to cast doubt on ... laws forbidding the carrying of firearms in sensitive places such as schools...." 554 U.S. 579, 626 (2008).

This is also not a matter for local decision. The Ohio Constitution provides that the General Assembly - not local school boards – "shall make such provisions" necessary that "will secure a thorough and efficient school system ... throughout the state." (Article VI, section 2). The General Assembly must not abdicate its constitutional responsibility to protect Ohio school children and leave those decisions to inconsistent local decisions.

Authorizing individuals with no firearm training to bring loaded firearms into schools would be unconscionable. If there are going to be guns in schools, the persons carrying them must be rigorously trained in the use of firearms as required by current 109.78. SB317 would reject that principle and endanger Ohio schoolchildren and teachers, so please vote against SB317. Thank you.

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