

Testimony on Senate Bill 317  
Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Submitted by:  
Mark Gooch

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, the bill exempting armed teachers in schools from training. I am a resident of Wooster, Ohio, and I personally can't imagine a more dangerous proposal than to arm teachers or staff in schools. While it may give an impression of creating safety, I believe it actually does the opposite.

As you may already be aware, surveys have shown approximately 73% of teachers, 63% of parents, the National Association of School Resource Officers, and the head of the Major Cities Chief Association are opposed to this type of legislation. So, that is a majority of those who might be asked to carry a firearm, the parents of the students, and law enforcement officers. That would seem to be a strong indicator this isn't welcomed legislation.

Arming teachers and staff in schools has several significant problems. The first of which is potentially placing teachers and staff in the position of literally shooting their own students (most school shooters are current or past students). Asking someone to shoot another human being by itself is asking much of those people. It has been determined that police officers, who have extensive training, may have only a 25% accuracy rate when in an actual shooting situation. Asking a "civilian" with no training to do this creates a significant potential for missing and actually shooting an innocent bystander. Another potential problem we have seen often in the news, is the armed individual leaving their firearm somewhere it becomes accessible to students. This by itself can create the situation that is attempting to be averted by arming them in the first place. Lastly, when police do respond to an active shooter call, having an armed teacher or staff member places them in extreme jeopardy. When police are responding to such a call, they have to treat any armed individual as a potential shooter. This creates a situation where that teacher or staff member could themselves be shot or killed.

Not long after the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting, our local school district (Wooster City Schools) held a safety and security community meeting. While an individual brought up the idea of arming teachers, teachers, school administrators, and school board members (along with a school safety expert) all strongly expressed their opposition to this idea. So, there is at least one school district who does not support this idea.

I respectfully ask you to vote NO on SB 317 and keep schools safer by not encouraging arming teachers or staff.