

7/21/2020

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Before I begin, thank you to Chairman Coley and the rest of the honorable Senators for taking the time to read this testimony. It is exercises like these that allow the people to make their voice heard and uphold the underpinnings of our democracy.

As you well know, we are in the midst of a pandemic, with the COVID-19 cases in Ohio skyrocketing to levels not seen before. Ohioans are not only concerned with not contracting COVID-19, but also are struggling to pay their bills. Ohioans are also looking and planning the return to an important part of daily life: school.

For teachers, this year is unlike any other; for, teachers must plan how to most effectively teach students while dealing with new and unprecedented obstacles. **Having firearms in the classrooms should not be something teachers should be planning for anytime, but especially now.**

Under current Ohio law, all armed school employees—including teachers, security guards, and special police—must either complete an approved basic peace officer training course, or have completed 20 years of active duty as a peace officer. Senate Bill 317 **throws those requirements out the window** by exempting teachers from these requirements and allows school districts to arm teachers who have not met these safety training requirements. This is **not** the answer to keeping students safe in schools.

Not only is arming teachers unsafe, especially due to the possibility of a student getting their hands on the firearm if it isn't stored properly and harming themselves or others, it is opposed by teachers, with The American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association speaking out against it , so does The National Association of School Resource Officers. ^{1 2}

Even more worrisome is the potential for both intentional and unintentional shootings that can happen. In fact, both intentional and unintentional shootings have occurred in the past: “[a] janitor who killed two of his colleagues at a performing arts school in Florida[,... [a] Spanish teacher who was fired and then returned to school with an AK-47 in a guitar case that he used to kill the school headmaster and then himself [... [f]irearm suicides by faculty or staff at schools [...and]...[u]nintentional incidents, by both school resource officers in schools and teachers who accidentally discharged their firearms.” ³

Instead of passing dangerous gun legislation, Ohio should lead by example by passing legislation that is proven to make Ohioans **safer**. These include HB 183, which would require a background check on every gun sale, and HB 184, which would establish a strong red flag law. For schools, the COVID-19 pandemic is stressful enough. Schools **do not** need the added stress and potential liability of having armed teachers with insufficient safety training. **I highly urge you all to vote against Senate Bill 317.**

1 Everytown for Gun Safety. Keeping our kids safe at school: a plan to stop mass shootings and end gun violence in American schools. everytownresearch.org/schoolsafety. February 2019.

2 National Association of School Resource Officers. NASRO opposes arming teachers.

<https://nasro.org/news/press-releases/nasro-opposesarming-teachers/>. Published February 2018.

3 <https://everytownresearch.org/arming-teachers-introduces-new-risks-into-schools/>