

Testimony on Senate Bill 317
Government Oversight and Reform Committee

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.

I have three children - two in high school and one in college. The very thought of teachers or staff carrying guns near them with little training is chilling. While people have the best of intentions, carrying and using a weapon is a huge responsibility that needs to be taken very seriously. I do not see how minimal training on an instrument that can be used to take a human life is even under consideration of becoming law.

I have been following the issue of school shootings and efforts to protect students closely. I am far more concerned for the safety of my children with untrained personnel carrying guns in the building than I am from the threat of an active shooter. If you follow news stories on this issue, you have seen multiple cases of human error - school staff who have unintentionally shot a weapon, shot themselves or others or left a gun unsecured in drawers or bathroom stalls. Untrained personnel cannot be expected to thoroughly understand the law, safety measures or even when it is appropriate to use a weapon. Even in the best of circumstances, drawing a weapon would be hard. Why do you think people with minimal training would be able to handle it appropriately in an emergency situation? If this is the intention of the law - having these personnel protect students in an emergency - why are we not keeping the current standards and having personnel who are trained and understand when and how to react? Why are you telling me that less is better when it comes to my children's safety? Why are you telling me less competency is fine when it comes to life and death situations for my children and their classmates? Shouldn't you want the highest standards? Even some of the most highly trained law enforcement in the country, the New York City Police Department, see their ability to shoot accurately decrease significantly when engaged in gunfights with perpetrators.¹ Yet you expect individuals with a minimal 8 hours of training (6 of which can be online) as sufficient?

¹ Bureau of Justice Statistics. July 2016. <https://bit.ly/2pg0whl>. 9 Rostker BD, Hanser LM, Hix WM, et al. Evaluation of the New York City Police Department firearm training and firearm-discharge review process. Rand Corporation. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG717.html>. Published 2008.

I cannot state how strongly I oppose SB 317. I also cannot understand why my elected representatives are reducing standards in any aspect of any law that impacts our state's children.

I ask that you all vote no on SB 317.

Sincerely,

Julie Womack