

Ben Adams SB 317 Testimony
Tuesday, July 21, 2020

My name is Ben Adams, I am a lifelong resident of Butler County, and am a father of five children who either attend school in the Madison Local School District, or just graduated from the Junior/Senior High School. I am also one of the plaintiffs in the *Gabbard v. Madison Local School District* lawsuit mentioned in SB 317, and I am here to testify against this dangerous bill. I want to emphasize that I am not opposed to guns in general. I am a gun owner myself. I am opposed to the dangerous lack of training for armed teachers who carry guns around my children and their classmates.

As a firefighter and paramedic for the last 17 years in southwest Ohio, I am keenly aware of the crucial role of training in preparing first responders like me to respond to and function effectively in a high-stress environment. To qualify as a Level II Firefighter, for example, I completed 240 hours of fire training with an additional 1800 hours for paramedic certification. There is not a day that I go to work that we don't train on something, from how to deploy a hose to how to respond to a fire involving hazardous materials. In a department like mine, we might go three years before encountering a hazmat incident, but I know that if we are not busy practicing these skills then we are busy losing them, and that we will not be prepared when the day comes to use them. Training is the essential link in the chain for my fire department to deliver services to our community.

I also know firsthand that training plays the same critical role when first responders are called to a school shooting. In February 2016, there was an active shooter in the lunchroom of the Madison Junior/Senior High school. All five of my kids were on campus that day. I heard about the shooting from a co-worker who was on duty, and responded from my house which is about four miles away. I treated patients at the scene, along with my wife who is a nurse practitioner. It was a chaotic scene, as you can imagine, but our training is what enabled us to react calmly, effectively, and safely. Thankfully, no one was killed.

SB 317 would put my children and their classmates in danger by allowing their teachers to carry guns into the classroom with less training than a little league umpire. That means if my son wants to be a little league umpire, he needs to get more training than the teachers who will carry guns in his classroom. That is wrong. I find it incredible that someone with so little training should be trusted to patrol my children's schools with a gun.

I am afraid of what could happen when armed teachers are asked to make life and death decisions that are beyond the scope of their training. Even day-to-day functions like a teacher walking through crowded halls, or interacting with students, or sitting down to face his or her class, become potentially dangerous if that teacher is carrying a gun but is not properly trained to

use it. When my son's teacher sits down behind the desk, I am afraid that a loaded gun on his hip points out into the classroom.

Unfortunately, our local board of education has given our community little reason to trust their judgment about how much training armed staff should receive. Our board members have day jobs like maintenance at a steel mill, doctor, and owner of a landscaping company; they don't have any background in law enforcement or expertise in police training. When I and other parents asked them at board meetings for the research they claimed to have done when deciding to arm our school's teachers, we were met by silence. When we served a public records request asking for the research, they admitted that there were "no responsive records."

The training program they selected, called "FASTER," is a three-day crash course run by Ohio's gun lobby. Discovery in our lawsuit revealed that this rushed training is dangerously inadequate to prepare teachers to carry guns in school. Armed staff members testified that they get as little as 10 minutes of live fire training practicing an active shooter response with the gun they will later carry at school. And when they role play scenarios with simulated guns, each trainee gets just a single turn playing the role of armed responder. In my line of work, if you are responding to an emergency and trying to perform a task that you have practiced just once before, someone is going to get hurt or killed. SB 317 forces our children to bear this risk.

In my professional life, as in my personal life, I am motivated by a desire to protect and ensure the safety of my children and our community. That was my reason for joining the lawsuit in Madison about the dangerously inadequate training for our school's armed staff. As a parent with five children, I know that I am responsible for their safety and wellbeing under my roof. When I hand that responsibility off to the teachers and staff of the Madison Junior/Senior High School each morning, I want to know that they are not going to cut corners with my children's safety. SB 317 would do just that, and for that reason I ask you to oppose this dangerous bill.