

Testimony on Senate Bill 317  
House Criminal Justice Committee

Submitted by:  
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Chairman, Coley, Vice Chair, Ranking Member and Members of the Committee: Thank you for allowing me to share with you my strong opposition to SB 317.

What would Jesus do?

If we asked him, "Jesus, do you think we should arm school teachers with guns?", what do you think he would do? What would he say?

I don't think he'd be satisfied only with only opposing this bill, but he would want to interrogate how in the world we found ourselves here in the first place. How we go so lost, so far from reality that we would think a solution to a gun violence crisis is to create another one.

The fact that I must speak up in opposition and plead to our lawmakers to not to pass a bill that puts guns into the hands of teachers is an indictment how untethered from reality we find ourselves.

I shudder to think I must provide you a statistic on this matter. I cringe that you would all need to hear me cite a case of settled law to be convinced not to proceed. To intellectually legitimize this bill as a rational and peaceful plan by engaging in any debate debases us all. This is absurd on its face, and there is no one aside from gun lobbies who approve of this. Because for a gun lobby, a gun solves all problems. Even the problems that guns create.

But there is no piece of legislation that could be introduced that could possibly disrupt this fundamental truth: more guns equals more gun deaths.

So, here we are, in the middle of a pandemic that has taken the lives of over 140,000 Americans. We see cases, hospitalizations, and deaths rising everyday. We don't even have a plan to get our children safely back into school, yet here we find ourselves in the middle of all of this discussing how we can find a way to get more guns into school.

So, my plea to you today is to your hearts. A gun's sole purpose is to end another's life. It is supposed to protect "Us" vs "Them".

But Jesus taught us we have no "thems"! We have no enemies. There is only us. You and I. Everyone. We.

Guns are a grand embodiment of this false "Us vs Them" mentality that we carry. "This will give US power over THEM. This will keep US safe from THEM."

But let us lay down our arms, for I have good news. Life does not have to be this way! We have the power to pave a path toward peace. But in order to get there, we must center ourselves in reality by truth telling. We must recognize our own complicity in these systems, and our own autonomy and how they can be changed. We must see the love, compassion, and the humanity in every single person. In all of *us*.

As a Columbus resident and a strong advocate for peace, I beg you to join me in strong opposition to SB 317.

And finally, I will leave you with a quote from the late, great Civil Rights Hero John Lewis, "If you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, you have a moral obligation to do something about it."