

Testimony on Senate Bill 317  
Government Oversight and Reform Committee  
Sen. Bill Coley, Chair  
Sen. Matt Huffman, Vice Chair  
Sen. Hearcel Craig, Ranking Member

Submitted by:  
Shannon Gallagher  
Dublin, Ohio

Chair Coley, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present my testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 317. My name is Shannon Gallagher. I am a mother of four, a former middle school teacher, a gun owner, and a committed advocate for violence prevention. I became an advocate for common sense gun reform a few years ago as the instances of gun violence in schools rose in our state and around the country. As a mom and an educator, I knew it was my responsibility to become proactive in trying to help make schools physically and emotionally safer, as well as supporting legislation that addresses the growing concerns of violence in our schools. Not for one second during all my years of education classes and teaching, did I ever think I would be here today asking for a no vote on a bill that would give school districts the authority to allow teachers to carry firearms in schools with little or no training, especially during a global pandemic. How dare you willfully and purposefully add another variable to an already unprecedented and unstable scenario. When I found out on Saturday that this was being pushed through this week, I started calling my friends who are currently teaching in the Greater Columbus Area. The anger, frustration and despair was palpable. One started crying saying, "How can they do this to us now?" She has been teaching high school in Ohio for decades and she is amazing at it. I have been in her classroom and have seen first hand how much she loves her students and how much they love and respect her. Through her tears she said, "Shannon, I will not continue teaching if this passes." She could not be here today because she is taking a course during her summer break regarding how to effectively teach during this COVID-19 crisis and no, the issue of firearms is not part of the curriculum.

Even if a teacher is a trained marksperson, this bill would add an unnecessary element of danger that could potentially be devastating not only to the student body but to the staff as well. I have looked into the CCW training and I noticed that one of the tenements to the training is to always be mindful of your firearm. Most of us choose

teaching because we want our focus and energy to be on educating and nurturing students and being an emotionally and physically safe person in their lives. As a teacher with a class of about 40 students who rotates thru every 55 mins, there is no way I could have or would even want to have my attention be on anything other than my students, especially during a pandemic. Ohio teachers, staff, administration and students are feeling the gravity and stress of how to safely return to school during COVID-19. Please allow them to do their jobs without adding yet another unknown factor to this already overburdened system.

Chair Coley, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig, and Members of the Committee, I thank you for your time and consideration and again urge a no vote on Senate Bill 317. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.