

Testimony on SB 317- Opposition
Government Oversight and Reform Committee
Senator William Coley, Chair
Vice Chair Matt Huffman

Submitted by:
Leah Bunck

Chair Coley, Vice Chair Huffman and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony in opposition to SB 317. I am writing to you today as a mother of two, spouse of a teacher who was involved in a school shooting, voter, and social worker. I oppose because I am strongly against the changes it can bring to our schools.

As an essential worker providing meals for seniors through Meals-on-Wheels in Central Ohio, I am unable to attend the hearing in person. I believe it is imperative for my voice to be heard in opposition of this dangerous bill.

SB 317 would allow teachers to carry loaded guns in Ohio elementary, middle, and high schools without completing the safety training required by current Ohio law.

As you know under current state law, all armed school employees must either complete an approved basic peace officer training course, or have completed 20 years of active duty as a peace officer. Basic peace officer training is regulated by the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission, and comprises approximately 728 hours of instruction.

SB 317 would exempt teachers from this requirement, and allow school districts to employ armed personnel in schools with as little as 8 hours of concealed carry training (6 of which can be completed online)—or with no training at all, if firearms are not concealed when carried.

We need our students to learn in a safe environment. As the wife of a high school teacher, I am confident the effects of this bill will lead to more dangerous schools. An increase in people with guns, with a reduction in training only leads to a false sense of safety within our schools. If this change is made, students and teachers would spend more time preparing and debriefing active shooter simulations than an armed professional with a gun in the school spent in training to carry a gun within that very same school.

There are many occasions where an adult may need to intervene with an intense interaction between students. As a social worker, it deeply concerns me that someone with only a few hours of training, or maybe no training, will have easy access to a gun and could make quick decision to unnecessarily use that gun on a student. Guns should not be in our schools as a deescalation tactic. Our student and school systems deserve better, and deserve to feel safe in an institution of learning.

For the safety of our Ohio's children and teachers, I urge you to oppose this SB 317 and discontinue hearings on it.

Respectfully,

Leah Bunck, MSW