

SB 317 Opposition Testimony
Ohio Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Submitted by:
Connie Bunnell Griffis

Chair Senator Coley, Vice Chair Senator Huffmann, Ranking Member Senator Craig and members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony in opposition Senate Bill 317. My name Connie Bunnell Griffis and I am a resident of Middletown, Ohio. I moved to this address in 1987 so my sons could go to Madison Local Schools and we were VERY HAPPY with that decision. I was teaching at the time (now retired). I have taught at various capacities, 4th through 12th grades for 35 years and have a Masters in Counseling and Special Education. Madison was the last place I would have expected to have a school shooting incident AND the last place I would have thought the Board of Education would have a dangerous reaction to allow teachers to carry firearms!

When the Butler County Sheriff started posting billboards about arming teachers, I thought that no educator or board member could be so foolish as to go along with that idea. To my amazement the Madison Board of Education jumped right in. It was only after this uninformed decision did they realize that they may have made a mistake and broken the law. Instead of admitting they made a bad decision they tried to cover up their mistake by not taking any parent or community members questions.

When people asked about what kind of training these armed teachers have, the Board pointed to the Buckeye Firearms FASTER training. During the trial it was revealed that the FASTER training only offered 10 minutes of actual gun handling According to sworn testimony. It was also discovered that one teacher failed his/her shooting test twice and passed it on the third time. I could not believe the training allowed a teacher to fail 2 times.

At a board meeting, in response to a question about the mental health of the armed teachers, the board president claimed that a physician/board member was in charge of that. His response was, "No I'm not. I'm not qualified to do that".

This new law would give "Carte Blanche" to these same people who covered up their mistake in the first place. Now this committee wants to give these same people the power to completely say who and how teachers are armed? They can't even be responsible for compliance to their own rules. Finally, the BOE president claimed (under oath) that the superintendent was the person who authorized individuals to carry firearms. The superintendent testified, "I do not authorize!" SO I guess nobody is "authorized" to carry firearms at school. So does that mean anyone CAN or MAY?!

As a former teacher, I believe that a teacher should NEVER carry a firearm. Gaining a good rapport with students is most important in effective teaching. And if a student needs to talk with a teacher, that weapon is a huge impediment. It's traumatizing. Anytime I have needed to talk to someone who is carrying a firearm, the discussion is impeded by that weapon. Imagine what that does to a child. Children are suffering from enough trauma at these tough times!!

Armed educators is a disaster waiting to happen. Already there have been a number of incidents or "close calls" mostly in Texas. An assistant principal left her Glock in the restroom where a 5th grader found it. A high school teacher was dancing with students, did a cartwheel and dropped his firearm. And a firearm was dropped and it discharged in a school. Fortunately no student was around to be hurt. BUT sooner or later someone WILL BE HURT or KILLED!!

Even my "gun loving" fully trained and certified hairdresser says that arming teachers is a terrible idea. She expresses a number of "what ifs". What if a teacher is overcome? What if there is an accidental shooting? What if a student decides that disarming his teacher is a fun challenge? Etc. And when this terrible accident happens, the person held responsible will be the teacher. There is no insurance, not the BOE, and certainly not the OEA to go to bat for the teacher whose firearm is involved in a catastrophic accident. His or her life would be ruined: financially, professionally, and emotionally. Please protect Ohio's children and oppose SB 317.