

Testimony on Senate Bill 317  
Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Submitted by  
(Information on Witness slip)

Chair Coley, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to SB 317.

As an Ohio resident and voter I am distressed by SB 317 and I oppose this bill. It is an adage of writers that if there is a gun in the wall in scene one, it should be fired in scene two. What this means for real life is that when we introduce guns into schools, they are more in our consciousness and more likely to be used. In the hands of armed civilians who are already managing a stressful job, they are likely to be misused and used poorly, leading to injury, death and liability.

As a professional in the field of stress management, I want to bring up a few basics of how the nervous system works in stressful situations.

The fight-or-flight response activates in reaction to stressful situations. The same mechanism is triggered in the body whether a situation is an immediate survival threat or not. That is to say, the same internal cascade goes off in relation to an active shooter situation, a disruptive student, or a family stressor. The more stress-producing situations we face in a day, the more high-strung our nervous systems are.

When we are not armed, a stressful situation that is not an immediate danger to our survival will put our bodies through the stress response. Over time, this can cause damage to our own bodies. We may also lash out at others, but not likely kill them.

When we are armed, unless we have extensive training to control our stress reactions, a mis-reading of a stressful or unexpected situation (a surprise party, or unexpected visitor for example) can quickly become deadly. Additionally, the majority of our teachers are white, and with research showing that even well-intentioned white people to mis-read Black people as a threat, we risk of even greater error in judgement in reaction to our Black students, parents, and community members. (1,2)

SB 317 reduces the number of hours of training teachers would need to carry a gun

from over 700 to 8 or less. That said, even with a full peace officer training, arming teachers is not an effective strategy to address active shooter situations. There are far more effective solutions.

I urge you to vote against SB 317.

Thank you.

1 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2633407/> Trawalter, S., Todd, A. R., Baird, A. A., & Richeson, J. A. (2008). Attending to Threat: Race-based Patterns of Selective Attention. *Journal of experimental social psychology*, 44(5), 1322–1327. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2008.03.006>

2 <https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/psp-pspi0000092.pdf> Article: “Racial Bias in Judgments of Physical Size and Formidability: From Size to Threat,” by John Wilson, PhD, Montclair University; Kurt Hugenberg, PhD, Miami University; and Nicholas Rule, PhD, University of Toronto; *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, published online Mar. 13, 2017.