

Testimony on Senate Bill 317
Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Submitted by:
Stacey Higgins

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 a teacher, a parent, and a resident of Ohio, I am asking you to vote no on SB 317.

Teachers are bound by what I consider to be a sacred trust with our students, their families, the communities in which we are employed, and society as a whole. Our mission and responsibility is to educate students. Carrying a firearm impedes and perhaps even nullifies that trust. By placing firearms into our classrooms, you are setting up situations from which there are no winners. Placing firearms in classrooms, under the responsibilities of educators NOT law enforcement personnel, will lead to accidents, and at worst to the catastrophic pitting of teacher against student.

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. Under current state law, all armed school employees—including teachers, security guards, and special police—must either complete an approved basic peace officer training course, or have completed 20 years of active duty as a peace officer.

SB 317 would negligently 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. This is a recipe for disaster—particularly when one notes increasing levels of mental illness and trauma in our student populations.

As an educator of over 20 years, in my experience there is no amount of training that makes it safe for teachers to carry guns in schools. SB 317 would worsen an already-dangerous situation by gutting the training Ohio law currently requires and allowing teachers to carry guns in schools without extensive safety training. Please vote no on SB 317.

Stacey Higgins
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