

Chairman Coley, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Government Oversight and Reform Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Sandra Fiehrer. I'm a concerned Ohioan, mother and community volunteer from OH 86. This is the first time that I have sent testimony to the Senate. I am writing today because I am tired of the persistent toxic disconnect between this legislative body and the majority of Ohio constituents. I am writing this because I am vehemently opposed to SB 317. I am unequivocally opposed to putting guns in classrooms and so are my family, my neighbors and ALL of the teachers I know.

In the middle of a global pandemic, it's infuriating that your legislative priority is to expand gun use in our schools instead of focusing on gun safety measures like background checks supported by the majority of Ohioans. Make no mistake, introducing more guns into schools actually increases the risk of gun violence. There have been numerous incidents already where a gun has been discharged by staff on school grounds.<sup>1</sup> It is a fact that gun violence disproportionately impacts communities of color negatively and schools in these communities will no doubt be similarly impacted. Every teacher I know opposes allowing guns in schools, period. School safety experts agree. I worry for the them and for my friends with children in school.

SB 317 would exempt teachers from the current state requirement requiring completion of basic peace officer training or 20 years of active duty as a peace officer. Allowing armed personnel in schools with just 8 hours of concealed carry training (6 can be completed online) or no training at all (for open carry) is a grave mistake. This will not reduce school shootings. The gun lobby attempts to justify these policies by invoking fear of active shooter situations. Ohio gun lobbyists continue to push dangerous legislation, this time to drastically reduce safety training for school staff. Arming civilians with less training than law enforcement officers is not an effective way to stop school shootings.<sup>2</sup> I implore you to stop listening to lobbyists and listen to constituents who are teachers and parents. As my 79 year old mother in Columbus said "this makes no sense."

School districts are under immense pressure to coordinate and implement their school plan for the fall amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. The last thing that they want is to add dangerous guns to their classrooms. They're deciding whether or not they'll even have students in person in the classroom while your focus is on making it easy to put guns in their desk drawers. We could be solving actual educational issues in Ohio, instead of passing legislation that creates new ones.

Ohioans aren't outliers, we're not looking to add more guns to our everyday lives, we're looking for solutions to end gun violence like the majority of Americans. I have talked about guns in classrooms with many neighbors, voters in our precincts and Ohioans signing the background

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<sup>1</sup>Seltzer A, Winston H, Hitchcock O. Breaking: Man arrested in 2013 murder of Dreyfoos school janitors. The Palm Beach Post.

May 25, 2017. <https://pbpo.st/2RE4R8V>. Schrott M. Officer accidentally discharges weapon at George Washington Middle School.

Alexandria Times. March 13, 2018. <https://bit.ly/2BnC8zT>. See also: Everytown for Gun Safety. Gunfire on School Grounds.

<https://bit.ly/2ZMXpj>

<sup>2</sup>Rostker BD, Hanser LM, Hix WM, et al. Evaluation of the New York City Police Department firearm training and firearm-discharge review process. Rand Corporation. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG717.html>. Published 2008.

check ballot issue. Their answer was always the same, including the teacher I just messaged with as I was composing this testimony: "WTF!"

I ask you to consider my testimony and end further hearings for this incredibly dangerous bill. It should not proceed. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.