

Testimony on Senate Bill 317
Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Submitted by:
Janet Leopold

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. I am a deeply concerned parent, teacher and voter, and I feel we all must act for the safety of students, teachers and staff all over Ohio. I have learned that SB 317 is legislation that would drastically reduce common sense safety requirements for teachers/staff/others who carry loaded handguns inside elementary, middle and high schools.

The current state law states all armed school employees must complete approved basic peace officer training courses or have 20 years of active duty as a peace officer. Such basic peace officer training comprises about 728 hours of instruction. This is a law that protects not only the students/staff/others within the schools, but it also just makes common sense. I believe schools should be a safe haven for our young and impressionable minds.

However, SB 317 would 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. The federal government's chief legal, law enforcement, public health, education and emergency management agencies all agree that allowing civilians to carry guns in schools is not sound security practice. A bill with the focus on arming school employees ignores the data that show risks and consequences of bringing more guns onto school grounds. Arming civilians within a school which is filled with children, has been proven as not an effective way to stop an active shooter.

As a teacher, parent, Ohio citizen and voter, I strongly oppose SB 317. This dangerous legislation would allow loaded guns in schools, increase the risk of more violence, and create a huge liability on schools when they arm teachers/staff/others. I have seen and heard the frightened words, actions and thoughts from my classroom students and my own children when they had to perform a "lock down drill for an armed/active shooter in the building". It truly is a harrowing experience for everyone, as it is not easily forgotten or explained away to innocent children and growing young men and women.

Making it easier for people to carry a loaded weapon into a school is a disaster. None of us should ever have to hear a student's words/ thoughts and witness the terrified reactions that would occur when that untrained and uncertified teacher/school

employee has an accident with the gun, or if that person has to use the gun in an unexpected situation - creating an outcome that would range from extreme fright for students/staff to an outcome of death and destruction within the school and community. SB 317 is not an acceptable piece of safety legislation for our most prized young citizens in Ohio. You and other lawmakers should put the safety of your constituents first by rejecting SB 317.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Leopold