

GOVERNMENT
OVERSIGHT AND REFORM
COMMITTEE

Witness Form

Today's Date 7/20/2020

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Organization Representing: _____

Testifying on Bill Number: _____

Testimony: Verbal Written Both

Testifying As: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Are you a Registered Lobbyist? Yes No

Special Requests:

Written testimony is a public record and may be posted on the Ohio Senate's website

I am a graduate of Madison schools, as is my son. I am also a gun owner. I am from rural Madison township in Butler county. There was a time in my life I was so proud to say where I was from. Sadly, due to the issues raised by local control left to school boards, I can tell you I am no longer proud to be a Madison township resident or a Madison graduate. In 2015 there were serious bullying issues at the school, but no one in the school administration would take a stand on it. I spoke then to the board and the school administration, I warned them that the environment in the community and school was going to lead to a school shooting, they found my warning almost humorous. They mocked me and ignored me. They even told me the Ohio revised code regarding bullying and harassment in schools did not apply to them. I doubted myself and backed down, but I did take my son out of the school. In 2016 while I was at work I got a text then a call from a close friend that there was an active shooter at the school, my stomach dropped out and I felt nauseated, and I began to pray for all of my loved ones there that day. It was a day of horror beyond anything I hope none of you ever know, understand, or experience. One of my close friends at work was trying to calm me down, I kept sputtering about how I tried to warn them, and he kept telling me he remembered how hard I had tried to warn them, I recall him using that old saying that you can lead a horse to water but you can't make them drink. After the shooting I thought the school board would have learned to maybe respect and pay attention when a concerned parent spoke up, my son wanted to return to the school and his friends, and I allowed him to return, thinking the school administration had to know to listen now. And they had not just one, but two armed resource officers, and they added additional security. I thought it would be safe. I am giving you this background in the hope that you will take my testimony here seriously and to heart, because this bill is about local control, right? So I want to talk to you about the dangers of local control, and the impacts on a community. The lawsuit referenced in this bill is from Madison township because in 2018 the Madison school board with the encouragement of Buckeye FireArms decided to arm teachers

without allowing any input or discussion from the community. People and parents had questions and concerns, but the board refused to discuss anything or answer even simple basic things like even "if" parents would have a choice as to if their child was in a classroom with an armed teacher, or what the process would be for authorizing people who were armed. Things got so strange at school board meetings during public participation they often refused to allow me or other concerned community members and parents to speak or question things. On the occasions they let us speak, they were openly hostile and even went so far as to have my father removed from a school board meeting by an armed resource officer when he began speaking, and once when I was allowed to speak they had the armed resource officers jingling guns standing on opposite sides of me. They gave out identifying information and doxed people who opposed their behavior. They gave info to people in militia groups like the Ohio Sheep Dogs whose leader was arrested for building bombs in my old elementary school. The president of the school board lived across from my elderly parents, and would have people over to his home to threaten my parent's guests, as well as take pictures of their vehicles and home and post them on social media. I ended up sleeping in front of my parents home on some occasions to ensure their safety. I felt unsafe in the community I grew up in. I felt unsafe in my own home. Neighbors I had known loved and respected all my life were now behaving with hatred and malice. It got worse, the board changed "policy" without even a vote or discussion so that in order to speak at a school board meeting you had to show up in person during their office hours at the board of education and show ID. They made it harder to speak at their board meetings than it is to speak to you today. I worked an hour away and was no longer even allowed to speak to the board because I couldn't comply with their in person registration requirements and no one from the administration would wave their requirements for parents like me. The only email I got an answer to, was from the then new superintendent about how that was how the board had now chosen to interpret their policy. They also changed the requirement so that any parent who did not live in the district could not speak, so divorced parents who didn't live in the district couldn't speak, or parents with children that were open enrolled could not speak. It got worse from there, although I was not a party to the lawsuit regarding the training requirements, because I was the first parent to speak out with concerns I was often blamed for it so other than to scream at or try to intimidate me after board meetings, the president of the school board refused to answer any email I sent or communicate in any way, so I followed all of the law suit in Gabbard V Madison, I read all the filings and depositions, I found out that one armed teacher had failed shooting accuracy twice. I found out all all the "research" the board claimed to have done was a lie. I found out buckeye firearms was getting thousands and thousands of dollars given to them from our Ohio tax dollars by the Ohio general assembly to give substandard training to arm teachers. It was to say the least alarming and overwhelming, yet again I was trying to warn the school administration they were making poor and dangerous choices. I often felt a sense of dread. But still yet it got worse. I have heard it said that people can "vote with their feet" if they don't like the decisions of a school board they can un-enroll their children and leave. I could not vote with my feet because, by the time they started to implement their dangerous and obviously unregulated plans to arm poorly trained teachers with little to no research, or assessment protocol, my son

was 18. When I told my son I wanted to withdraw him from the school and move, he refused. I had bought a condo in another school district but he refused to move. I pulled the old grounding, taking away the cell phone tactics etc but nothing changed his mind and he was adamant he would stay in the district with friends or his grandparents before he would move and go to another school for his senior year. I was so afraid for my son and I had no choices. It got worse from there, the majority of the few staff I trusted at the school quit and left. The rate of staff turn over for the school skyrocketed. So for my son's senior year I started every morning praying that no teacher would shoot my son at his school where much of the administration was openly hostile toward me. I got to sit and listen to the kids talking about which teachers they knew that were carrying guns, and how easily they could be taken from them. It was horrible. It was terrifying. The local control issue tore my peaceful community apart, endangered my son and made my life a daily nightmare. I don't think a plumber who does not think plumbing is necessary would be very helpful, just as I don't think a legislator who does not think laws are necessary and things should be left to local control is being very helpful, this bill removes the laws constraints and has no standards, training, or controls for any person a school board authorizes to go armed in a school safety zone, it is not upholding the legislative duty to protect your constituents, and if it passes our legislature it is leaving it totally in the hands of low level politicians who I know are not equipped to make good decisions, and who have no accountability for those decisions. Look what happened here in Columbus from the abuse of power from one person states away when a police officer murdered George Floyd, we had riots and damage to business here... do we really want to risk allowing local school boards to give anyone so much power in a school? Do we want to see Columbus burn like Minneapolis when an armed teacher kills an innocent child of color by accident or worse on purpose? You have so many here trying to warn you right now, trying to tell you this is dangerous and fool hardy, you are the proverbial horse being led to water... please take the drink, please do not circumvent the ruling of the 12th district court, please stop this bill