

GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT AND REFORM COMMITTEE

Witness Form

Today's Date 7/19/2020

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Organization Representing: Self _____

Testifying on Bill Number: Senate Bill 317 _____

Testimony: _____ Verbal X Written _____ Both

Testifying As: _____ Proponent X Opponent _____ Interested Party

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Testimony on Senate Bill 317
Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Submitted by:
Marti Barker

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.

Greetings from Bellbrook. My name is Marti Barker. I am an Ohio resident, a retired Air Force officer, a Gun Sense single-issue voter and, most importantly, a very concerned mother of two teenage daughters.

I became very concerned about safe gun legislation after the mass shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, in February 2018. The evening news came on as I was relaxing on the living room couch still dressed in my fatigues after a long, stressful day at work. My youngest daughter, who was in sixth grade at the time, took notice of the reporting about the tragic incident and commented in the most chilling, matter-of-fact manner: "You know, Mom, if that ever happens at my school, I hope I'm in Ms. [Jones'] class because her classroom has a door to outside. But I really hope it doesn't happen while I'm in Mr. [Smith's] class because there aren't any windows or doors in his room." Hearing these words come from my baby girl without any real emotion or concern, landed on me like a ton of bricks. I realized at that moment, unlike me and generations before me, she had not had the luxury of going to school without worrying about her own safety and well-being. She is, in fact, the exact same age as the children who were killed during the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary in December 2012...a gut-wrenching episode that ushered in a new "skill" taught in our nation's schools: active shooter drills. These children, who are now preparing to start high school, have lost an innocence and sense of carefree security that breaks my heart.

All this makes me angry because we, the collective "adults in the room," have failed to protect that carefree innocence that we took for granted as children growing up in America. What's worse is I don't think we've taken any meaningful measures that would prevent one of these mass shootings in our schools since they started at Columbine over 21 years ago. To the contrary, we've apparently accepted that school shootings are just the price we pay for living in a free society. So instead of trying to prevent school shootings, let's put a gun in a good guy's hands to attempt to minimize the collateral damage when they happen.

In doing so, we've signaled to our children, now an entire generation, that we don't have the will to put in place measures that would significantly reduce the likelihood of similar school shootings occurring again. It's no wonder kids these days have so many mental and emotional issues. They see an apathy for their safety and well-being exhibited by those who are supposed to protect them. And that apathy is perceived as a lack of love and compassion...and I get it. Who wouldn't feel unloved and unprotected when we've allowed for these types of senseless and often preventable (with common sense legislation) shootings to continue?

So today I am submitting this testimony to vehemently oppose SB 317, a bill that could effectively allow any school employee who can legally obtain a gun, to carry a loaded firearm in Ohio schools. It is risky enough under the current "guns everywhere" environment that allows a school employee to carry a loaded weapon once (s)he has completed the requisite Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy. To waive that requirement and allow school boards to determine whether teachers must complete the extensive training, leaves the door open for local officials to implement an extremely dangerous policy. One that would put school staff members, students and first responders at risk of being accidentally shot by someone who does not have the skills nor experience to properly store and handle a loaded weapon during an intense active shooter scenario. If we aren't going to make the changes necessary to drive down the likelihood of active shooter incidents occurring in our schools, we ought not create an opportunity for one by putting loaded weapons in classrooms and the hands of ill-prepared school employees. Please oppose SB 317.

Sincerely,
Marti Barker