

Testimony on Senate Bill 317
House Criminal Justice Committee

Submitted by:
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Members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you for attention to this testimony in opposition to SB 317.

My name is Dr. Pamela Warrick. I am a psychologist from Westerville, OH. 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. As a Psychologist working in the public schools I adamantly oppose this legislation.

Professional organizations such as the National Association of School Psychologists, the National Association of School Resource Officers, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the American School Counselor Association, the School Social Work Association of America and the National Education Association (NEA) all oppose arming teachers even with training. A 2018 NEA survey found educators overwhelmingly reject proposals to arm teachers and other school personnel. According to Lily Eskelsen García, president of the National Education Association, "Bringing more guns into our schools does nothing to protect our students and educators from gun violence."

The National Association of School Resource Officers has clearly articulated the hazards associated with individuals possessing firearms who lack extensive law enforcement training and the sworn authority to enforce public safety. These risks include the following:

- An individual with a gun could be mistaken for the shooter.
- Firearm skills degrade quickly and require constant practice under high stress conditions.
- Being able to shoot a gun does not mean an individual is psychologically equipped to shoot another person.
- Discharging a firearm in a crowded school setting is extremely risky.

Steps for increasing safety in the schools should focus on improving access to school mental health professionals like school psychologists, school counselors, and school social workers, who serve on the frontlines of meeting students' mental health needs and provide threat assessments for students at risk of harming themselves or others. Additionally, we need to increase communication and collaboration between school and community responders to ensure that at-risk students receive the interventions and supports they need.

I honestly, can't fathom how anyone could possibly believe that reducing the level of training required for teachers to carry guns in schools could possibly make our schools and children safer.