

Chairman Coley, Vice-Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Government Oversight and Reform Committee. Thank you for accepting my testimony on SB317.

My name is Sharon Kokot. I am a lifelong Ohio resident and voter, and a volunteer with Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, a nonpartisan grassroots organization with nearly six million supporters. We support the Second Amendment and work to prevent gun violence through gun safety education and by advocating for common-sense gun safety reforms.

I am also former teacher and the mother of a young teacher in Ohio schools. Nothing is more important to me and my daughter Christina than school safety. Like all dedicated teachers, she is committed to the well-being of her students in every way. Student well-being begins with school safety.

SB317 poses a direct, dangerous and unnecessary threat to that safety. This bill allowing armed teachers and other school personnel into the classroom with **only 8 hours of training for concealed carry and no training whatsoever for open carry of firearms is a recipe for disaster.**

It is difficult to imagine that any teacher is sufficiently prepared to take on an active shooter situation, neutralizing a perpetrator while avoiding hitting any children in the process. Even well-trained police find such situations challenging in the extreme. A teacher with little or no training is far more likely to cause accidental harm than to save anyone under those circumstances.

Possession of a deadly weapon is a grave responsibility, and that responsibility goes beyond confronting an active shooter. If teachers are going to carry guns to school every day, they must be **experts** in practices of safe transport and safe storage. One lapse and dozens of children, if not many more, will have access to those guns. With all the distractions that a teacher faces managing a class of 25 or 30 students, a teacher with a gun in the room had better be hyper vigilant.

We read about accidental shootings by children all the time. We know it happens even at home. How much more likely that it will happen in a classroom? We know too that there have already been cases of students getting access to teachers' weapons in schools and even of teachers accidentally discharging the guns themselves. With less training, the risk would only increase. It's no wonder that The American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, the nation's two largest teachers' organizations, oppose arming teachers at all.

Teachers are required by Ohio law to undergo years of college education, student teaching, examinations, observations and more to be certified to teach our children reading, science or math. We support those stringent requirements because we believe in the critical importance of learning. **Do we care so little about our children's very lives that we are willing to put them in the room with an armed teacher with no training at all in the use of a firearm?** How can

this even be a question??? Who is going to want to send their children to school in such a setting?

As we weigh the safety of sending our children to school in the face of COVID-19, let's not add yet another threat to their health and well-being. Vote no on SB317.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Kokot