

To Chairperson Coley and the members of the committee considering Senate Bill 317:

I am a voter from Cincinnati, and I am writing with strong opposition to Senate Bill 317.

In general, I find it absurd that there are even serious discussions about arming teachers. Teachers already face challenges that prevent them from effectively teaching their students (limited access to funding, supplies, lack of support from parents, etc.), and expecting them to also act as a de facto security guard by carrying a gun is an incredibly misguided idea. While no amount of training makes it “okay” for teachers to carry guns in schools, this bill makes it even less safe by lowering training requirements for teachers who might choose to carry a weapon on their person.

The American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, the two largest teachers’ organizations in the United States, oppose arming teachers. A March 2018 survey of teachers found that 73% of educators oppose proposals to arm school staff at all. SB 317 would lower the training standards for teachers who are armed, which would only serve to increase the likelihood of an accident or incident involving a weapon in a school setting.

There are much better alternatives for keeping students and teachers safe from active shooters--decreasing the training requirements for a teacher to carry a firearm in schools is NOT one of them. Teachers are trained to educate our children, not act as the first line of defense against a school shooter. Instead, we should focus on investing resources in solutions that address the root causes of school shootings (counseling, mental health, common sense gun regulations). Taking away training requirements so that more teachers can carry weapons in the classroom doesn’t make any sense—the more guns on school grounds, the more likely gun violence will occur, especially with less training.

Please discontinue hearings on SB 317, and spend your time in a more productive way by working to improve the resources available to our teachers and students.

Ed Herbers