

Testimony on Senate Bill 317
Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Submitted by:
Maureen Washock

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.

I am a parent of two school-aged children in first and second grade. I know the horror that goes along with sending your children to school in the post-Sandy Hook era. My children have come home and told me about how drills have gone well because “everyone had a place to hide” and “it’s fun hiding under the pile of backpacks”. I want to see firm policies in place to protect our children. I want to see our leaders making decisions to protect our students in objective, evidence-based policies not rooted in emotion.

The facts are that guns in schools do not make our students safer. Arming teachers, especially without rigorous standards for education and training through apolitical organizations, is a dangerous proposal that ignores the inherent risk associated with bringing more firearms on campus. We have all seen the national articles where a student accesses a teacher’s weapon or a firearm meant for defense of students is accidentally discharged on school grounds. What we have not seen documented is an occurrence of an armed school employee that is not a resource officer stopping a school shooting. We know that school shooters show warning signs in advance. Funding and implementing threat assessment programs, which are proven to work and supported by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Secret Service, would be a better, more effective use of resources.

I am a pediatric nurse. I assume my motives in choosing my career are similar to that of a teacher- a love for children. I am sure parents want all of my focus on their child’s medical care just as I want my children’s educators focused on their education. I would imagine even a police officer would hesitate to discharge their weapon on a child. This is why I feel strongly that anyone carrying a gun into a school should be focused on that alone and have no less training than that of an officer.

My children’s school has an armed resource officer who is an active employee of our local police department. He is involved in many aspects of school activities and my children are benefitting from the opportunity to learn to trust and respect the police

through first-hand experience. This, in addition to threat assessment and physical security upgrades, is how school security should be managed. A conscious effort to make this available to all districts rather than providing subpar substitutes should be looked at instead by this committee.

Thank you for hearing my testimony.

Sincerely,
Maureen Washock