

Testimony on Senate Bill 317
Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Submitted by: Mary Anne Crampton

Chair William P Coley II and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 317. My family includes two young granddaughters, a niece who is an administrator at a NEO school district and two school-age nephews in suburban schools. Among other civic roles, I serve as a trustee for a private boys high school in Cleveland. All of these relationships inform my decision to write to you today.

There is no evidence that arming teachers makes our schools safer. Nonetheless, this committee not only continues to consider ways to do just that, this bill, SB 317, would dismantle existing regulations designed to ensure the safety of students and staff in Ohio schools.

Our state has laws in place that require all armed school employees to complete either an approved basic peace officer training course or have completed 20 years of active duty as a peace officer. Ohio Peace Officer training comprises approximately 728 hours of instruction. Senate Bill 317 guts the training Ohio law currently requires and would allow teachers to conceal-carry loaded handguns in schools with as little as 8 hours of concealed carry training, 6 of which can be completed online.

Arming civilians is simply not an effective way to stop an active shooter. Law enforcement officers receive an average of 840 hours of basic training, including 168 hours of training on weapons, self-defense, and the use of force. Even some of the most highly trained law enforcement in the country, the New York City Police Department, see their ability to shoot accurately decrease significantly when engaged in gunfights with perpetrators.¹

With absolutely no evidence that arming teachers with virtually no training will make Ohio schools safer, I can only conclude that the sponsors of this bill are working with the interests of the gun lobby in mind - not the safety of families who elected you to office. These are harsh words, but let me further remind you that this bill would allow a teacher **WITH NO TRAINING AT ALL** to carry a loaded handgun in full view of students and staff. How can anyone explain that this scenario would make our schools safer?

Surely you are aware that there have been numerous incidents where guns carried into schools were misplaced — guns left in bathrooms, locker rooms and sporting events. There was even an incident where a gun fell out while a teacher did a backflip. There are also multiple incidents where guns were stolen from teachers by students, or cases where guns were misplaced and later found in the hands of students.²

¹ Rostker BD, Hanser LM, Hix WM, et al. Evaluation of the New York City Police Department firearm training and firearm-discharge review process. Rand Corporation. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG717.html>. Published 2008.

² <https://everytownresearch.org/report/arming-teachers-introduces-new-risks-into-schools/>

There are plenty of evidence-based ways to make schools safer!³ Arming teachers is not one. I do not understand! Why do you continue to consider a bill that will make schools LESS SAFE?

Finally, I would be remiss not to note the irony that this committee is holding hearings on a bill that would make schools less safe at the very same time that leadership and teachers across the state are valiantly attempting to SAFELY re-open schools in the midst of the global Covid-19 pandemic that has cost the lives of more than 4,000 Ohioans to-date. With so many resources being expended at the local level to keep citizens safe, it is unconscionable that today in the Columbus statehouse this committee is considering a bill that holds no evidence that it will make Ohioans safer and in fact is dangerous.

If the safety of students, faculty and staff in Ohio schools is truly your intent, Senate Bill 317 must be opposed. Please vote “no” on Senate Bill 317.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mary Anne Crampton

³ <https://everytownresearch.org/report/a-plan-for-preventing-mass-shootings-and-ending-all-gun-violence-in-american-schools/>